MATSU

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TO

F. J. C.

"So, if but once the drowsy heart of Man awakes to Joy and Love,
Even ere desire be cast aside, he surely findeth Peace;
And fool and sage and cynic all alike shall enter in . . .
To whomsoever, piteous thing, be he good or bad,
That from afar hears Buddha's Vow, and stands his faith therein,
Will Buddha say: 'All hail, all hail, thou Pure and Great and Wise,
So surely will his name in Heaven be known as Lotus-flower.'"

SHIMRAN SHONIN: *Shoshinge.*

CHAPTER I

OF course, at Oxford, we had no idea that Matsu was a Buddha.

Buddha, we knew, was the founder of an Oriental religion, an Indian prince who lived very many centuries ago. Tomlinson had a Buddha, a golden figure asquat on a golden water-lily in a lacquer cabinet with a gilded lining. Tomlinson used to burn cubes of incense in front of his Buddha to the accompaniment of suitable (and not too difficult) music. A favourite incantation was that Hindu song of Rimsky-Korsakoff :

" Les diamants chez nous sont innombrables,
Les perles dans nos mers incalculables ;
C'est l'Inde, le pays des trésors ! "

Tomlinson used to croon this melody to his Buddha with a sketchy piano accompaniment, until some prosaic Philistine hurled a cushion at him. Tomlinson was a poet ; he almost won the Newdigate with a poem on " The Desert," but his home was somewhere in Golders Green.

" Shush ! " said Tomlinson to the cushion, rebuking the offence rather than the offender ; for he had originality of a kind, not always up to sample ! " You break in upon the meditations of the Holy One ! You disturb the creative thought of a God ! You bring about celestial abortions ! You——"

" Shut up," said the Philistine.

" My Buddha likes to hear the music of his own land ! "

" A lot of rot about India written by a Russian.

Your Buddha is a Japanese. Play him something out of the 'Mikado':

"'Here's a pretty mess!
Here's a state of things!
To her life she clings!
Matrimonial devotion
Doesn't seem to suit his notion
Burial it brings!
Here's a state of things.'"

Then some one suggested—it may have been that Turner who played Pythias to Tomlinson's Damon:

"Why don't we introduce Matsu to Buddha? He can tell us all about him!"

Buddha to Buddha! The irony of it, don't you see? Still more ironical since neither Turner nor Tomlinson nor any of us knew that Matsu was himself a Buddha.

"Matso—o—o! Matso—o—o!"

We were all rather bored that evening, and had nothing to do except rush about annoying people. Matsu, in evening dress (smoking jacket and white waistcoat), puffing conscientiously at a heavy briar pipe, received the deputation with his usual impenetrable smile. He rose, too, with natural courtesy as we lurched into his room. We had not yet taught him to forget his manners.

We introduced Tomlinson. Not necessary.

"Oh, yess! We know, I think!" said Matsu, shaking hands.

We explained that Tomlinson had a Japanese Buddha, of immense age and sanctity, so he said, but we did not altogether believe him; we would like to have the expert opinion of a compatriot.

"Oh, yess! Very nice, I'm shoo-ah!" Matsu was an obliging little person, hardly as yet emerged

from the "Oh, yess" stage of English. He used to sit patiently through his lectures, acquiring merit of a kind, perhaps, but understanding only a word here and there. Quite inscrutable, those brown oriental eyes, in that smooth oval ivory face! Quite inscrutable (and quite disarming) that ready smile over those pearls of perfect teeth! Inscrutable, too, that politeness, which discouraged intimacy. Matsu was three years older than most of us, quite new to England, absorbing our customs with application rather than spontaneity, and speaking as yet very little English, but the advantage was not always or wholly on our side. It was difficult to "rag" Matsu. As we escorted him across the quad to Tomlinson's rooms, the atmosphere of the evening changed. The raw edges were smoothed off our hooliganism.

Matsu was introduced to Buddha with proper decorum. Poets and Philistines alike were hushed. Would Matsu fall on his knees and intone a Shinto prayer? Not a bit of it. He did not even take his pipe out of his mouth. He approached the image, not as a devotee, but as a connoisseur.

"Oh, yess! Very nice!" he said. "Yess, it is a Japanese Buddha! I think so."

"Is it very old?" we asked, respectfully.

"May I take it?" Matsu asked Tomlinson. No, he did not want to carry it off from the infidels, but merely to lift it up and examine it under the light.

"It is not so old, I think! Yess! No!" He did not wish to hurt the owner's feelings, but the impression was that he did not esteem Tomlinson's treasure very highly. "This is a statue of Amida Butsu," he explained. "Buddha Amida."

"Oh! Yes," we murmured, vaguely.

"And who's he anyhow?" asked a Philistine.

"He is a Buddha—a kind of god. There are very many Buddhas in Japan."

Matsu excused himself on the ground of having much work to prepare, and retired, without ever telling us that he himself was a Buddha, a kind of god!

Matsu was on easy terms with all his acquaintances, but he had no special friend. Out of those inscrutable almond-shaped eyes of his, he was observing us intently, expecially those of the Eton set. Towards the Tomlinsons and Turners he was courteous and hospitable, but he had realised almost at once that they did not count. The Eton set consisted of ten or twelve second and third year men, who dominated the college. They were not all Eton men; nor yet did all the old Etonians belong *ipso facto* to the Eton set. Far from it. The Eton set were the self-constituted arbiters of everything—sportsmen, most of them, but not all (there was the scholar, Dalrymple, for instance) and all of them were members of a social microcosm which danced with each other's sisters, stayed in each other's country-houses, and shot each other's pheasants and grouse. Not that all of them possessed such wealth—about five out of the ten, perhaps; Dalrymple was as poor as any parson, but he was accepted unhesitatingly on equal terms; and, as it was but one step from the Eton set at Bourchier College to Downing Street and to the high places of the City, his future was assured. The Eton set dominated the college as the Colossus bestrode the harbour of Rhodes. The "dons" tried to humour them and were rewarded with affectionate contempt. Other dons of other colleges used to chaff the Bourchier dons for their subservience to their own undergraduates, but

there was envy in this persiflage, for never had the prestige of Bourchier stood higher, and this was entirely due to the force of character of these ten or twelve alarmingly prodigious young men.

"Hubris!" commented the Warden of New College. "That kind of pride leads to its own nemesis!"

Meanwhile the Eton set used to smash the lamps in the quadrangle regularly every Saturday night, and pay for their repair regularly every Monday morning—just to show that they were the masters.

Lord Mannifold belonged by right to the Eton set. He was an Etonian and an aristocrat; he was Sheila Mannifold's brother. He was poor—very poor for a peer; and he was making himself daily poorer, but that, as I have explained, did not matter at all. He had all the qualifications. He might indeed be accounted an *ex officio* member of the Eton set. But he never troubled to take up the honours thus thrust upon him. He never shared in the breaking of the lamps in the quadrangle, but he used to get drunk in bars in the town. He never joined in chanting the famous traditional chorus of derision bellowed of a summer night at the denizens of a neighbouring college:

> Gourdouli!
> Has a face like a ham!
> Johnson says so!
> So it must be true."

Instead, Lord Mannifold—yes, the brother of the divine Sheila—would be playing roulette in shady company, with undergraduates from unmentionable colleges, with non-collegiates and even with townees!

For somewhere outside the orbit of us prole-

tarians of Bourchier, the Eton set, in its entirety almost—no ; Dalrymple, who had to make his way in an expensive world, had no time for such trifling—the whole Eton set, I say, revolved around the divine Sheila Mannifold. Yes, "revolved" is the right word, for the dancing craze which followed the war was at its height and Sheila was one of "Society's most popular partners"—to quote the *Titler*, etc., who followed her career with special favour, trumpeting all the less interesting of her doings. It reported her dancing at the famous Londonderry Ball, and the shimmering creation of silver *lamé* which on that notable occasion metamorphosed her into a mermaid, but it said nothing about her complicated relationships with the Eton set at Bourchier College, nor her feud with her mother, a religious fanatic who was convinced that her daughter was dancing her way direct to the eternal bonfire, nor her contemptuous superiority over her two brothers, Victor at Oxford and George at Sandhurst, nor the secret of her finances. The Mannifolds were broke (every one knew that, and even the *Titler* conveyed as much to those who knew) ; they had inherited the barony and encumbered estates, but the money had passed elsewhere. Sheila, therefore, was living on her credit —or her discredit. Perhaps old Lord Glenbrigg was already there, in the background. Perhaps she was discreetly exploiting the Eton set. I do not think so. In that very close company, the thing would have become known, and her worshippers would have valued Sheila less highly. Nor would she herself have risked the loss of those very special jewels. Some ten of the most promising young men in England—rich, handsome, popular, original, enterprising—banded together in a confraternity of which she, Sheila Mannifold, was the particular goddess.

All worldly considerations apart, there was something so notable, so intoxicating, so inspiring in this homage (so amazing, too, in the brutal years of disillusionment which followed the War !) that the nobler side of Sheila's nature kindled not with a sudden blaze of passion, but with a smouldering fire. Arthur Fenwick was her favourite—tall, curly-headed, a horseman born, a tremendous rider to hounds, a useful middle-weight boxer and an original if somewhat inarticulate philosopher. Darcy Caldecott was more than a worshipper ; he was a declared aspirant to Sheila's hand and heart. This was because he was the handsomest and the stupidest of his set—dark, pale and Byronic. None of the others presumed to have exclusive proprietary rights, or dreamed of carnal union with a spirit of air and flame. Somehow, somewhere, Sheila Mannifold would find a husband, since that is the fate of womankind ; every influence and appetite would urge her that way. But from that distressful moment onward, the flaming Sheila of the dawn would be dead, and her place would be taken by a pathetic changeling, struggling and floundering in the human mire.

It was amazing how the personality of Lord Mannifold's sister dominated the monastic cloister of Bourchier College. Even we outside the fringe of the Eton set, we who had never seen her, could feel her proximity—not without a certain glow. I am sure that Tomlinson in an over-furnished parlour in Golders Green, would put down the *Titler* page open at one of the latest studio-portraits of the Honble Sheila Mannifold, with some remark about having met her brother Mannifold only a week ago : "Quite a nice fellow—rather a waster—but the sister is really divine"—conveying some idea of

acquaintance with her also, a myth destined to harden into a memory in later years :

" Yes, sir, I knew Sheila Mannifold when I was at Oxford. Her brother (poor chap !) was a great friend of mine. The loveliest creature imaginable. Such wit and charm ! Not so much what she said as the way she said it ! And with those candid blue eyes to vouch for every word she said, and that smile, for which we would do anything, anything ! "

Yes, anything ! Lord George Cardew, the tall hero of the Oxford Alpine Club who had clambered over every roof in the town just because it amused him, who would have been in the Bourchier Eton set if he had not been at the ' House,' and who was a kind of honorary member, had often declared, in and out of his cups, that he would do anything for Sheila Mannifold.

" Is that true, George ? " she had challenged him, in that far away, honey-sweet voice of hers, one late night in Commem Week when much dancing had been followed by supper on board a large motor launch hired for the purpose by Arthur Fenwick, determined that this night of nights (most of the set were at the end of their last term) should never end.

" Yes, it's true, Sheila, when you look at me like that."

" Dive in then, just as you are ! "

He leaped on to the handrail, stood poised an instant and then plunged. It was in the middle of that straight reach in the river between the last of the college boats and Iffley Lock, where most of the rowing practice takes place. Not so dangerous, one would think, as a hundred other of Lord George's escapades. But it was the end of him ! He never rose again from that plunge until a day or two later.

At the moment no one had realised the tragedy. There had been much dancing and champagne, and brains were not over clear. George had been "dared" by Sheila to dive into the river. Sheila had a much-abused way of "daring" her worshippers to do this and that, which entailed more risk for them than for her. George had dived overboard, and perhaps to scare Sheila, or perhaps because he was fed-up with the party, had swum ashore and gone back dripping to his lodgings. All the young people on that launch were so full of life that the idea of death could not penetrate into their consciousness. "There shall be two of you dancing on the deck; one shall be taken and the other left!" The swift drama of human experience had not touched them until that night.

Sheila alone was uneasy. She had been wrong to dare George Cardew. Supposing something had happened!

"Doddles!" she said, calling Darcy Caldecott by his ridiculous nickname. "Let's go and see if George is back in his digs."

"Why bother about George; he's mad anyway!"

But Sheila insisted and the launch returned to Folly Bridge. The whole party—there were about fifteen of them, the men outnumbering the women—marched with forced laughter and some singing up St. Aldates to Lord George's lodgings in the High. Paris frocks, evening dress, white waistcoats—about three o'clock on a warm summer night—starlight but no moon. They were admitted by a grumbling landlady in woollen dressing-gown and curl-papers, who "'ad never 'eard the like at that time of night and all." No! His Lordship hadn't come home yet. One fine day he wouldn't come home at all so far as she could judge from his carryings-on.

Ill-omened words! The supper-party yawned the early hours away over a desultory game of poker. Later on, they had breakfast together at the Mitre still in evening-dress and were commented on as an event by other breakfasters. Most of them returned to London in motor-cars that morning, still laughing at George Cardew's disappearance—laughing but anxious!

"As soon as he is seen again, bring him to lunch or supper at the Embassy Club, and we'll all be there."

Two days later, George's body was recovered at Iffley Lock, and the scandal flamed into full eruption in the evening papers.

It was the end of the spring-tide of those dazzling young bloods whom I had known and envied at Bourchier. Henceforth, the city swallowed them up, or their country-estates or big-game-shooting or world-travel. If those names are mentioned now, some insect is certain to ask: "Wasn't he mixed up in that drowning business at Oxford?" It was not only the tragedy of the whole affair, but a quite false impression was created that the dead man's friends could have saved him, had they been more sober and less careless. As for Sheila Mannifold, her "I dared him to do it," rang through the Coroner's court and through every newspaper in England and was discussed in every drawing-room, every club, every pub and every servants' hall in the country. A heartless, ruthless woman who sent gallant young fellows to their doom without a thought save for her own vanity and sensationalism. There was something gratifying to the sickly wraith of English Puritanism, moribund since the War and splenetic on its death-bed, in this showing-up of so notable a member of the Smart Set, who was much too

beautiful to be good. Sheila Mannifold from being famous became notorious. There was no wavering in the loyalty of her tried friends. The Eton Set of those years at Bourchier refused to hear any whisper against her, even when later on there was plenty of irrefutable scandal to hear. To them, she remained Sheila Mannifold, something amazingly lovely and inspiring; but to the world at large she became suddenly rather fly-blown. And to herself? Sheila affected a sympathetic regret for the tragedy of poor George, but refused conscientiously to accept any blame or responsibility in the matter. This, in the circumstances, was unbecoming; a show of contrition would have been more seemly. Sheila's apparent hardness alienated many of her friends. As a matter of fact, the tragedy had been a terrible blow to her self-esteem. In the midst of her amazing social success, of the worship of her friends, of the radiant joyfulness of everything, Fate had struck with an appropriateness which she could not then appreciate. Everything seemed hideous and distorted. Life was unjust; God was unjust. Laugh, since ye cannot be merry! Across the flowering borders of country-house gardens, across the flutter of the tennis-courts, across the swaying measures of syncopated dance-music, those innocent blue eyes would see outlined in clear relief the tall black figure of George Cardew poised for his final plunge. A sudden giddiness would beset her, a sudden *haut de cœur*—physical rather than mental.

"I get the wind-up when I think of poor George!"

But even this was a rare admission. Sheila's pride would not accept even that modicum of responsibility which common sense must necessarily impose upon her lovely shoulders. She began even to blame George Cardew for getting killed in order

to poison her name and perhaps—who knows—to unsettle her brain and make her capable of quite extraordinary things. The flight to Moscow with the young Soviet airman, the Lake Tchad adventure, and then the Matsu episode ! I am certain that these things would never have happened, if on that black midsummer night Lord George Cardew had safely swum to shore. Old Lady Mannifold was correct—though scarcely merciful—when she received her erring daughter with that harsh raven's croak :

"You must pay for your sins, child ; we must all pay for our sins."

CHAPTER II

It shows the force of Sheila's character that even in this story I cannot get away from her. I had not meant to introduce her at such length, or to anticipate so much of her history. But somehow she holds me. I can see that slim figure—not so tall as I had imagined from report and from the picture papers ; that casque of reddish golden hair ; those bluest of blue eyes, under arched eyebrows of a darker shading than her hair ; and the flower-like purity of that face, in which no guile or wickedness appeared—only from time to time a cloud of reflection that would descend and swiftly pass. The Angel of Audley Street !—so the sillier papers were beginning to call her.

"No one can look like that and be a rotter," said Arthur Fenwick, whom his friends called "Wix," when challenged over one of her earlier escapades.

> "But to you who have not known her
> Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?"

This was found scribbled in pencil at the end of poor George Cardew's Alpine Club Record in which he had entered up in business-like style his various perambulations over the roofs of Oxford. But who or what could have inspired him to quote those unexpected lines of Browning, for there was nothing very literary about George? Who, but Sheila Mannifold? The word "mistress" was written shakedly and askew, as though ashamed of its aspirations and implications.

I myself remember seeing her in the porch of Bourchier College, garbed in a light blue leather motor-coat belted rather tightly at the waist—nothing very fashionable about that attire, which she might have bought second-hand or borrowed from a friend. She was swinging a blue leather cap in her free hand; the other rested on her brother's shoulder—Lord Mannifold, the only man in the world who never saw anything in Sheila. So I was held up on my way across the quadrangle by the flash of that glorious hair; it was already cut short, for the shingling fashion had just come in. What sacrilege! Being with Victor Mannifold, this must be the famous Sheila. I was attracted nearer as by a powerful spell. I found an overwhelming reason for turning aside in order to inspect the notices of lectures, concerts, cricket matches, lost property, etc., outside the porter's lodge. But Sheila with her brother and two of the Eton set moved away at my approach towards the small two-seater car which was waiting for her in the Broad; that was before her Rolls-Royce days. I heard her say (in that rather slow, deliberate way of hers—honey-sweet, her voice):

"How I shall manage, I'm not quite sure; but as you know, I don't care a damn what any one thinks about me!"

"I wish you did, Sheila," said one of her attendants. "Anyhow, write and tell me what happens."

"I don't write," she answered, "but I'll tell you later on."

With a wave of her hand, she was gone—away down the Broad towards London—blue cap, blue coat, blue car—unforgettable. I have seen her since on more elaborate occasions—on the films, on the stage, at the great race-meetings, at the Embassy and other such Clubs, at the Omnium Gatherums of London, but never to such perfection—an incarnation of the fleeting beauty of youth and its courage and its carelessness! Hail and farewell, Sheila Mannifold, loveliest creature of those awakening years! Far above me, far beyond me, *vers de terre, amoureux d'une étoile! Amoureux?* What other word is there for the passionate devotion of young men for women towards whom they burn with no carnal flame! If some enchantment had led my goddess to my arms, naked and consenting, I would have been abashed, astonished, incredulous, unready! I would have fled from my good fortune—even to the desperate remedies of Attis!

You see I cannot escape from her. She invaded my introductory chapter, she dominates my second, yet I had intended this book to deal with her in due course and not in first instance. For this is the book of the strange adventures in England and in Japan of Matsumoto Choson, Count Matsumoto in the peerage of his native country, and hereditary Living Buddha (*Iké-botoké*) of the Johoji monastery at Kyoto. Living Buddhas must move with the times, and the Elder Statesmen of the Johoji—the princely, priestly clan of which our Matsu was the hereditary chief—had decided that their Abbot should be sent to England in order to acquire the high polish of

European culture. The Japanese Embassy in London recommended a course of study at Cambridge or Oxford. This would give a thorough knowledge of English life in a way which mere social introduction could never produce. Several Japanese nobles had passed through the British universities—Marquis Hachioji, for instance, Count Nagasawa, Count Hattori and Baron Ben. They had enjoyed the free and easy life, the games and the ready friendships with young Englishmen of their own class. They had found no racial prejudice, whatever; nor yet the hard grinding curriculum, the procrustean formularism of a Japanese university. Even learning was pursued in a sporting spirit. The Japanese Ambassador of the time, a great admirer of all things British, sent a glowing account of university life to the Elder Statesmen of the Johoji. They did not understand much of it, but they respected it since it came from the Ambassador, and they had already decided that it would add honour to the Johoji, and lustre to the Living Buddha, if he were to complete his studies abroad. But which country should be honoured with this great trust? To the Elder Statesmen, America was the country of finance and vulgarity; France was the home of literature and art; Germany was the great teacher of technical and medical science; but England was the "country of gentlemen." Clearly this was the right choice for the Living Buddha, who was of high lineage and immensely rich. At least, the Johoji Temple was immensely rich. It garnered in its subscriptions from all over Japan, chiefly from superstitious peasants, who were taught that an offering to the Johoji would bring good luck in this life and would mitigate the pains of purgatory in the life to come. This could be effected by the intervention of the

Buddha Amida, the Saviour of all Mankind, and through faith in his name, and the Buddha Amida was incarnate in the living head of the Matsumoto family, being directly descended from the great priest Genson Shonin, founder of the Johoji Sect in the early years of the Thirteenth Century. But, you will remark from your store of superior knowledge, the teaching of Buddha, Prince Gautama Siddartha of Kapilavastu, India, was to the effect that there are no gods, and no purgatorial pains, and no personal survival after death, only a countless succession of recollections and forgetfulnesses culminating in a supreme and final forgetfulness which is called Nirvanah. How is this to be reconciled with the Johoji gospel? Was not this Genson of yours an arch-heretic and the teacher of a faith more like Mediæval Christianity than Buddhism? You are right, as usual. The founders of religion would be amazed at the vagaries of their own teaching, and none more so than Prince Gautama, if he were to be introduced at one of the great banquets of the priests of the Johoji at Kyoto or into the rooms of his living representative, Count Matsumoto, at Bourchier College, Oxford.

Matsu was slim and spare, tallish for a Japanese, with an oval face, rounded chin and thick lips, not unlike a Buddha. He had, when I first knew him, a heavy, reflective, somnolent air. He was naturally confused and dazed at the very different and active life into which he was plunged. The liberty of Oxford in itself confused him. His Japanese life, whether at school or in the monastery, was regulated by a strict time-table. Here, at Oxford, all such rules and regulations were reduced to a minimum. Matsu had amazed his tutor by his apparent voracity for lectures—History and Economics. Every possible

hour was filled in. But when Matsu went to the lectures, he found that he understood very little of what was being said. So, he began to drop them, not without misgiving. Nothing happened. He dropped them all ; still nothing happened.

Matsu had been educated first at a Japanese village school, where he had roughed and tumbled it with farmers' boys, learning his A B C, his first five hundred Chinese characters. Thence he had been promoted to the Peers' School in Tokyo, where he had worn a tight blue serge uniform and a peaked yachting cap with the school badge. There he had began to learn English, and also that he was somehow superior to the rest of the world ; but the snobbery of Japanese schools is so small a thing compared with the snobbery of England that it is hardly worth mentioning here. The Living Buddha did not proceed along the normal course through the Imperial University, because that great institution was considered to be too atheistical for a Buddha who must believe in himself. So, Matsu was transferred to the Buddhist Theological University at Kyoto where his simple, natural and healthy brain refused to absorb the fine-spun metaphysics which were the speciality of the learned priests. " Buddha " knew less than many of his humblest acolytes. Further—but this was not so important—the acolytes had been initiating Buddha into the engaging secrets of the Geisha Quarter. He rapidly developed that strong taste for women that had characterised his family all down the centuries. As a proof of the warm humanity of the Johoji gospel, this hobby was of course wholly laudable ; but to the world at large, the impression given by a dissolute and extravagant young priest wasting the temple revenues on riotous living was less admirable. The Johoji might fall

into disrepute, and revenues would then diminish. This had happened in the past, and there was danger ahead. So, the Elder Statesmen removed Matsu from the University at the age of twenty and sent him to England. This fact in itself would increase the prestige of the temple ; the English education might be beneficial to Buddha ; and anyhow, it would take him away from Japan during the spring of the wild oats' season.

Matsu—I return to his personal appearance—was very presentable. He was tailored and hosiered to perfection. The Embassy had seen to this, and the Embassy's taste and knowledge, in such matters, is beyond criticism. He was good-looking. He was not "yellow"—not to any possible stretch of colour-blindness. His complexion was a kind of ivory-cream, very soft and beautiful, flushing with a subdued roseate warmth when he was hot or embarrassed or excited. He wore a short moustache of the pattern which Charlie Chaplin's example impressed on most men of that time, whether they were comedians or not. Sleek jet black hair—with a soupcon of whisker ; large soft brown eyes under long girlish lashes. He was not merely good-looking, he was handsome, according to the rankly cosmopolitan standards which followed the war. He would have made his mark on the "movies" and on the hearts of the women young and old who swell the great fortunes of the films.

He was a good athlete. He played tennis well, for tennis is rapidly becoming the national game of Japan. He could dance a little. He was determined to learn to ride, to play golf and bridge and poker, to mix cocktails—and perhaps even to shoot and to follow the hounds. These last accomplishments were hardly suitable to the vocation of a Living

Buddha, since all taking of life is hateful to the pious. But Matsu owed it to his country and his temple to model himself on "The English Gentleman," and "The English Gentleman" does all these things.

It did not take long for Matsu to realise that the Eton set at Bourchier provided the models for which he was seeking.

He soon realised that the Etonians were the lords of the College, and were the persons upon whom he should model his appearance and conduct. But how could he copy their rough clothing, their silly clowning and their noisy ribaldry—he, a solitary Buddha, alone in unregenerate England. It was an impossible task. He would have liked to go to them and question them on the secret of their superiority, but they would probably tease him and laugh (without showing it) at his inadequate English. He flushed at the thought (a quite perceptible rubicosity overspread his ivory pallor); he hated the Etonians.

As a result, Matsu fell into bad company. He had no intimate friend, but he took up with Cornwell and Zarifi, both of whom were bad men. Matsu had a cottage near Abingdon. Apparently, a country cottage is a necessary appendage of a Japanese nobleman. Here, he relaxes; he disports himself with his women, he sips his wine and he entertains his friends. Matsu, seeing a pretty cottage to let, not far from Oxford, had thought: "Here is my *besso!*" and had taken it without further consideration. It seemed such a natural thing to do. It seemed quite natural to Matsu to instruct Hanjiro, his Japanese servant in London, to recruit two or three girls from the night clubs or the Chinese Restaurants and send them down to the Abingdon cottage for an evening's amusement. It was also

quite natural to invite Cornwell and Zarifi, who had an adult taste for women, whereas most of the undergraduates were shy or silly or sentimental. According to Cornwell, Matsu was a "great little sport," and his entertainment was quite a "sporting effort." The whole party were arrayed in kimonos, and there was plenty of champagne too, and dancing to a gramophone.

Now, gossip of this kind does not wither unheeded in the atmosphere of an Oxford college. The calm and smiling Matsu, so well-tailored, so serene, became for some a monster of iniquity, and for others a daring and dashing Don Juan. Even the "dons," who listen to everything but hear nothing, must have known something of what was going on, for in "Star Chamber" at the end of term some pointed remarks were made. This institution is, so far as I know, peculiar to Bourchier. At the end of term, every undergraduate must appear in hall, before the Master and a Board of Senior Fellows. He stands in front of the Master, with his tutor, who acts as his advocate, by his side, and has to listen to a summing-up of his character and activities in the form of a leisurely conversation between the members of the board, in which the tutor may intervene in defence of his pupil. The undergraduate himself, however, must say nothing at all unless addressed by the Master. This grim ordeal takes place in College Hall, and the gallery is open to the undergraduate public who (within limits) may express approval and disapproval. But it is difficult in the gallery to hear the conversations at the high table unless voices are raised to an unusual pitch.

The "dons" were commending Matsu's assiduous attendance at lectures, and the Master expressed a hope that he was acquiring benefit therefrom. His

tutor, young Whitelock, himself a rebel, replied that his pupil scarcely understood a word of what was said, but believed that some kind of grace was conferred by the mere attendance at lectures.

"So there is, so there is," piped the Master in his high squeaky voice; "there is the grace of keeping out of mischief for one thing."

"Which is more than usually requisite in Mr. Matsumoto's case," interjected Alcock, a bald-headed don who lowed like a cow.

"What's this?" squeaked the Master.

"Mr. Matsumoto has difficulty in adapting his oriental morals to the less precocious standards of English young men."

"The facts, the facts, Mr. Alcock," the Master replied; "I don't want any gossip here."

"I make no accusation," mooed Alcock, "but I think it is my duty to give this warning, both for the College's sake and for that of the young man himself. We will have no Yoshiwara morality here."

Alcock, like the bore he was, loved to drag in some reference or allusion to show the vast compass of his knowledge. Matsu had flushed at the word Yoshiwara. He had understood very little of the conversation, but his racial sensitiveness to insult had instinctively flared up at this familiar word.

"Mr. Matsumoto cannot be called upon to answer unspecified accusations," said Whitelock. "He has conformed to all the College rules; he has conducted himself with a sobriety and self-control which might be taken as an example by some of the more favoured members of the College"—a direct dig, this, at the Eton Set—"and he has made a better showing here, I think, than my colleague, Mr. Alcock, would have made, had he found himself marooned in a Japanese University."

The Master raised his hand to still the storm. Then, he addressed Matsu direct :

" Mr. Matsumoto, what have you to say about this ? "

Buddha flushed again, and then in a clear voice which carried to the delighted gallery he said :

" Excuse me, sirs, I am sorry for you. I do not quite understand, but I think a man must have a woman from time to time." Loud applause from the gallery ! This was the birth of a proverb, and that tremendous utterance of the living Buddha will be handed down from generation to generation of undergraduates until there is no more Bourchier and no more Oxford !

CHAPTER III

WHITELOCK certainly managed Matsu very tactfully. Instead of " jawing " at his pupil and making himself ridiculous, he paid a call on the Ambassador in the solemn grey house in Grosvenor Square—not without misgiving, for even to him, distinguished scholar and enlightened student of mundane affairs, there was something mysterious, inscrutable, even sinister, about the peoples of the Orient. Sensational romance with its suave and ruthless Chinamen had misguided even Whitelock—Whitelock of the " Constitutional History of Municipalities " and " Money Power in the Ancient World."

But His Excellency Baron Hotta soon put him at his ease. The Ambassador was a man of the world, a man of many worlds ; and an active sense of humour lurked behind that wizened face of an old grey rat. He was mildly amused at the story of the Abingdon villa.

"How very shocking," he said. "I fear Count Matsumoto is a wild oat!"

Mr. Whitelock went on to explain that unfortunately there would be only one end to such conduct by an undergraduate. He would inevitably be "sent down," dismissed from the University. He must therefore restrain his passions for at least six months in every year, or, if that were impossible, he must camouflage his outbursts under the guise of business visits to London.

"That is British hypocrisy," said Whitelock, "but no doubt Your Excellency understands."

"I understand," said Baron Hotta, "we are all hypocrites in our different manner. What a rude world if we are not! But this young man, this Count Matsumoto, he must not make a fool, he must behave himself. I hope the University may excuse him, he is silly and barbarous, he means no harm, but he must not disgrace, for he is like the Archbishop of Canterbury in Japan."

This juxtaposition of the peccant Matsu with Dr. Randall Davidson was too much for Whitelock's unstable gravity. He laughed.

"Yes, it is funny to you," continued the Ambassador, "to have an Archbishop descend from father to son like the King. In Japan it is not so. We worship the hereditary principle. If a man is farmer, let son be farmer; if he make umbrella, let son make umbrella; if he is painter or actor, let son be painter or actor; and if he is Archbishop, let son be archbishop after him. It is so with us."

Yes, thought Whitelock, some such system was prevalent in the Middle Ages, and way back through antiquity; it is not wholly unreasonable; but he said:

"And supposing he is not fit to be archbishop? It

is not the career I should have picked for Matsumoto."

"Then, we must degradate him, and chose another archbishop. But that is great strife and anger through all Japan, for religious people get angry very quick, and never think at all. Perhaps, in England also, may be!"

Really, this Ambassador was quite delightful. His slow, careful speech, his sly smile, his understanding of everything.

"It is difficult for us from time to time," he was saying. "Your Archbishop is always a good man. You choose him because he is good. But perhaps his son is no good—wild oat, perhaps, then you do not make him Archbishop, but in Japan we cannot help, for our Archbishops of Johoji Temple are hereditary, like Emperor or King. To the common people, they are Buddha himself; they call him 'Living Buddha,' and believe it is so. But if we choose another family, they say, 'This is not Buddha, for this is no true son of Genson Shonin; there is no true blessing in him.' But your pupil, Count Matsumoto, can save you from hell, if you believe!"

"And do you believe it, sir?" asked Whitelock; he had not for a long time been so entertained by any conversation.

"It is a superstition," said the Ambassador, "to think that a silly dissolute young man like Count Matsumoto can save you and me from hell. I think better that *we* should save *him*."

The result of this conversation was almost miraculous. Buddha reformed himself. The "*besso*" at Abingdon was given up, also the association with Cornwell and Zarifi. Matsu settled down into an obscure but not ignoble corner in the little world of

Bourchier—not in the Eton Set, of course, or indeed anywhere near it, but in respectable society with dull but excellent lads, who were keen at games, active in debating clubs, and hoped, by dint of tremendous swotting, eventually to carry off a Third. His tennis, perhaps, might have raised him into higher spheres. He played for his College, and very nearly for his University. But these laurels he wore with modesty and discretion. He really was a quite exemplary undergraduate.

Whitelock alone had penetrated beneath his shell, which was so well-fitting a carapace that its very existence was difficult at first to detect. His tutor's tact had made all the difference to Matsu's life at Oxford, yet most of us regarded the raw-boned don as being rather a rough diamond. He was the son of a postmaster in the Midlands and had educated himself by force of character and natural aptitude, and it seemed amazing to me—yes, and it still seems so—that he alone of all those well-born boys and highly-educated professors should have managed to assimilate himself to some extent with that hyper-aristocratic Oriental, who to us, even at his best on the tennis court, seemed to be more or less of a joke.

During his last two years, Matsu was very often to be found of an evening in Whitelock's rooms, where the young don kept open house for all comers, except for the Eton Set—those " damned Etonians," as he used to call them. Matsu did not often join in the conversation, which ranged with the utmost freedom over every imaginable subject, but he sat attentive in a corner, and would speak when spoken to.

Whitelock thought that he understood Matsu, and that he had inspired something like affection behind those inscrutable soft brown eyes. This

was true in its way, but Matsu, in his own estimation, was as high above Whitelock as were those "damned Etonians." The dénouement showed this quite clearly, and amused Whitelock, who carried his inferiority complex with grace and good humour.

It was Matsu's last term and the time for separation was approaching. Whitelock had found that his pupil talked readily enough about his native country, about its scenery and its customs, about his school-teachers and school-mates, about the Johoji monasteries, and, to a limited extent, about the Buddhist Law.

"All living is pain, so we are taught; we escape by faith in a Saviour; that is like Christian, I think."

Whitelock had expressed his wish to see Japan.

"Perhaps you would become my English secretary," said Matsu. "I shall need him very much, when I return."

This was a sudden inversion of rôles for Whitelock, who was tremendously proud of being a Fellow of Bourchier—the youngest Fellow, too. Evidently, to this quiet Oriental (as to "those damned Etonians," he suspected), the position was little more than a menial post. His inferiority complex writhed for a moment, then he answered:

"Thank you, Matsu, for thinking of it, but that would not be quite in my line!"

Nevertheless (or perhaps, because of this) they spent most of the long vac. together, doing a grand tour of the cities of Europe, which was a revelation to Whitelock, who had never been in contact with luxury before. To fly across to Paris, to buy a Rolls-Royce car as though it were a question of hiring a bicycle, to alight as a matter of course at hotels called Ritz and Carlton and Ritz-Carlton,

to lounge in sumptuous suites with private bath-rooms and telephones, to sample the special dishes of famous restaurants, to dance with the princesses of the cosmopolitan *demi-monde* and to find illusion in their arms (for both Matsu and his tutor lived up to the famous proverb—while abroad), to realise *instanter* the most fantastic of wishes, to remark at Vienna, "The one place which I must see before I die is Athens," and to awaken two days later at the foot of the Acropolis, having travelled all day by aeroplane from the Danube, to bask half-naked in open boats round the islands of the Greek Archipelago, to steam up the Dardanelles under the shadow of Achi Baba (Whitelock had served in the Gallipoli expedition) and across the Sea of Marmora to where

"Down the Horn Constantinople fades and flashes in the blue,
Rose of cities dropping with the heavy summer's burning dew."

All this as a tribute of friendship from an inarticulate Oriental and paid for out of the millions contributed by an ignorant peasantry to Buddhist priests! The whole story was so fantastic and dream-like, so close in atmosphere to the Arabian Nights, that a weaker brain than Whitelock's might have lost its sense of proportion and tumbled headlong into some gulf of megalomania. But Whitelock, epicurean by temperament, and stoic by training, survived, and returned, intact, to Bourchier.

To Whitelock, I am indebted for a diagnosis of Matsu, at the time of his first launching into London society, which I will not hesitate to borrow *verbatim*.

"Matsumoto, my first Japanese pupil, he scared me to begin with—so calm, so controlled, so smiling.

The difference in the skin, too, in the hair, in the eyes, the broken English—all rather disconcerting. But really he is just like the rest of them, more mature in some ways—he is over twenty !—more childish in others. But he responds to the same ideas—justice, courage, sense of beauty, sense of obligation, etc. He is subject to the same passions. There is little fundamental difference in Man, of whatever race.

" The ruling passion (see Pope's *Essay on Man*, and De La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*) is desire to win approval of others. This is curiously blent with an unquestioning sense of his superiority (in Japan, he is an aristocrat of aristocrats). A contradiction innate in all of us, but very pronounced in Matsumoto. He would have given anything to be in the 'Varsity Tennis Team. Not pleasure in the sport, so much as longing to be a famous man, to be praised in Oxford, in London and in Japan. I went to see him in his rooms on the evening that the choices were published. He was in a dreadful state, rather drunk, robed in a sombre kimono, staring at the blade of a short sword. Stage set for *harakiri*. That calm and that control of his were (as I suspected) a mask to fiery passions and torments of soul. But even in his grief melodramatic, a born actor. ' All finish ! All finish ! ' he kept on groaning. It was the fact that he had told his friends in London and Japan that he would be in the team. This made his rejection so hard to bear. ' I lose face before all the world ! ' He did not care twopence whether Oxford won or was beaten.

" But not selfish in the usual inconsiderate egotistical way of English boys. Far from it. He knew almost at once my favourite foods, drinks, smokes, etc. Everything I liked would be unosten-

tatiously provided for my gratification. Not for me only, but for all his friends. *Petits soins*, most carefully studied, as by a lover for his lady. And when I was in the Acland Home with appendicitis, he would come every day with flowers, newspapers, books. Was it sense of duty, or affection? The former, I think, chiefly. And yet——?

"'I say prayers for you to be well,' he told me at that time.

"'That's very very good of you; but you told me you were an atheist. To whom did you pray?'

"'In Japan, I would pray in my temple, so here I pray in the big church, in the Christchurch Cathedral.'

"'But if you don't believe in God?'

"'It is our duty in Japan, when our teacher is sick to pray.'

"Duty! If I were a Japanese, how I would hate the 'stern daughter of the voice of God.' Not that Matsumoto has so high a conception of duty. To him, it implies *what he is expected to do*. By whom? By other people, especially Japanese people. That is the horizon of his moral ideas. It may account for the strong histrionic strain in him. He is always acting up (or down) to what he thinks is expected of him. So, as far as discipline is concerned, he is very easy to manage, much easier than the average undergraduate, who instinctively rebels against control. Matsumoto instinctively submits to the idea of what is expected of him. He himself is amazed at the freedom of English life.

"'It frights me,' he has said. 'In Japan we cannot do so.'

"In Japan apparently every action, every hour is ordered. Family or friends are for ever watching one. Intolerable interference with one's most private

concerns is the rule. So, the Japanese are always hiding, yet nothing is hid ! Hence their world-famed secretiveness. They are very interdependent, too, and dare not give an opinion off their own bat ; they must go first and consult with their friends. Until this composite opinion is reached, they equivocate. There is a lack of frankness about Matsu. He does not answer Yes or No, but thinks first of what he ought to say or of what will please you. This too gives a mistrustful and machiavellian impression ; but it comes, I think, from lack of confidence. Aware of their weaknesses, the Japanese have made themselves strong.

" Matsumoto, torn away out of his Japanese setting, like a page of a book torn from its context, must be desperately lonely, at times. But perhaps he is not imaginative enough to see his loneliness. He is intelligent and observant, but not imaginative. I have rescued him from the orgy of lectures into which he had plunged—because he thought it was his duty to attend them. His English is quite inadequate to follow high, dull, detailed and abstruse themes. I have given him a few simple books to read so that he may know something about English and European history, and something about the amazing social and economic developments of recent times. He reads dutifully, he understands superficially, even in an examination he can give a fair account of his studies—but without a single ray of inner light. It is better for him to learn by experience than by books.

" He likes England now.

" ' When I was in Japan, I was afraid to go to England ; now, in England, I am afraid to go back to Japan.'

" He has no mother or father—even worse for

a Japanese than for us, I should think, since the family in Japan seems to be much more important than the individual. He has been brought up on the cold charity of institutions. Even we, when we think of return from foreign lands, it is of our wives and children and parents that we think—a natural yearning to be with our own people. Matsu has not got that yearning to call him back. He is in danger of becoming like the bat—a bird among the beasts, a beast among the birds.

"His religious position, as hereditary chief of a Buddhist Sect, I cannot altogether understand; but I think it must be as though the leadership of the Salvation Army became hereditary through many centuries in the Booth family. A faith with such a leadership must be in a poor way. Matsu is a superficial kind of rationalist. He does not believe in God or Buddha; and yet in certain circumstances he will instinctively act as though he did—as in the instance of his prayer for me. His own high position does not inspire him; he feels merely like some earthly lord—superior to others, but for mundane reasons.

"'I am Buddhist, yes; but I do not think that there is such thing as Buddha. In Japan they call me Buddha. How can I believe myself to be God?'

"How, indeed? That was one of the deepest things he ever said to me. I said that it would be difficult for him to take up his place as a religious leader.

"'Oh, no!' he said, 'it is quite easy. I do just what I am told to do, that is all they want me for.'

"Who are 'they'? The sanhedrin of his temple, I think. 'They' were Matsu's bogey. He shuddered to think of 'them.' I suggested that he might use

his position for the study of poverty and its remedies and various kinds of social reform.

"'They would not like me for that,' he said, 'it would trouble them.'

"He did not respond to any of the humanitarian ideals of Oxford. Abstract philanthropy had no call for him. He was an Eastern despot. But he had keen sympathy for any tale of woe which came under his immediate notice. 'Pitiful! Pitiful!' was a favourite word of his. When Turner's father died, and left his family without a penny, Matsu paid for Turner to finish his last year at Oxford on the strict understanding that I should dispense the money as a college benefaction, without any mention of his name. With children, he was at his best. He could make all sorts of ingenious little toys out of paper; he could draw the kind of pictures which make children laugh, and he liked laughing with them. With women, too, he was amusing and amused, and very generous—and successful. I found very little race prejudice against him among women of any class. Men seem to be more conscious of his orientalism than women. If anything, it added to his fascination as a generous admirer and a handsome young man. The bejewelled rajah and the passionate sheikh are the feminine ideals of our times, so Matsu fits into the picture. He profited by his opportunities, but with women of the upper classes, especially married women, he was reserved and silent.

"He was frankly contemptuous about women.

"'They are not as good as men,' he said. 'They were made to give pleasure and to bear children.'

"Our sex-equality puzzled him.

"'You make a new kind of woman,' he said; 'half a man to play tennis and cricket and make

business of all kinds. Such woman is no good at all.'

"He was surprised at the endless sex conversations of undergraduates. They knew so much more than he, and so much less. They would discuss inversions and perversions and introversions *ad nauseam*, yet still they seemed uncertain of their subject. Matsu had had six years' experience of the *geisha* quarters of Kyoto and Tokyo, and never, so far back as he could remember, had sex mysteries been hidden from him. Sex to him was an appetite, like hunger and thirst; and women were bought, whether in London or in Tokyo, like a square meal or a bottle of wine. An evident necessity of human nature, but shameful to discuss too openly—rather a subject for witty and discreet allusion. The English cult of pruriency and inhibition amazed him.

"His friend W—— had taken him to a quasi-Bohemian dance in a London studio, a pyjama-party, all the guests in the lightest of silks and cottons, on a hot summer night. Yet these girls were not professional *demi-mondaines*, but W——'s sisters, and his friends' wives and relations, etc., etc.

"'I shame myself for what I see,' said Matsu. 'I see almost everything in such undress. And then to dance with such naked girls, how can I help myself? But this girl never mind—a married girl with husband in the place. She almost faint with pleasure as we dance. I can see the strong desire in her eyes. Then I think, how if I say "No," I shame and grieve her? how if I say "Yes," this is not a dancing-hall girl but married? It is not as I ought. I bring disgrace and trouble to W—— who ask me as friend.'

"'What did you do, Matsu?'

"'I plead headache and run away. I put on my coat and opera-hat. I take taxi and drive quick to

that house near Regent Park, for I am all on fire, you see. In that house, they know me well and are kind and funny to me. The girls there all laugh to see me in pyjama, and there is more dancing and champagne and great fun. For there I can dance so without shame—but not with married women. That is shameful.'

"Our adulteries appalled him, our *ménages à trois*, and our *amitiés à quatre*. To him, an impassable gulf was set between the *monde* and the *demi-monde*. They provided for two different and separate needs of man—for his family-life and for his relaxation. That a girl of respectable family should live as a young man lives, sowing her wild oats, sampling and rejecting until she made the final choice, seemed to him extravagant and crazy; that a married woman should share herself between a husband and a lover, seemed to him corrupt and disgusting; and a cocotte should aspire to consideration and respectability, seemed to him absurd and improper. This strange phenomenon of the growing up of our girls into manhood, filled him with dismay. It was grotesque, it was *fin-de-siècle*.

"'It is the end of your British Empire,' he said, 'to have such women.'"

Yet, with increasing power, they attracted him.

By the time he left Oxford—he did not stay his full three years—his manners and deportment were impeccable. His English was easy, and a certain quaintness of accent and phrase added charm and gave character to an otherwise superficial young man. His Embassy launched him into a society rather higher than that which he had frequented at Bourchier. He met the kind of people who knew the Eton set, and called them by their Christian names. He met the Eton set itself, and was greeted

with a "Hello, Matsu, what are you doing here?" Matsu translating this to mean "What *the devil* are you doing here?" felt at once the lash of unintended scorn, which had riled him against the Etonians at Oxford. He even met Sheila Mannifold herself. He sat next to her through a dinner party at Lady E——'s house, and danced with her after dinner. She had seemed to him like other pretty English girls—neither more nor less. He did not know his London well enough as yet to realise her fame or her notoriety. He certainly did not apprehend her future significance to himself.

CHAPTER IV

MATSU kept a mistress in a flat in Maida Vale. This seemed to be quite a correct thing to do, and he was tired of a rather monotonous promiscuity. Her name was Joan Avery. She was a thin, fair, refined-looking girl, a permanent wave in her tow-coloured hair, with lips stained as red as a blood-orange and with laudable aspirations. She was not content with life as a cocotte. She aspired to rise on stepping-stones of her dead selves to higher things. She had cultural, religious and social ambitions, all of which were frustrated by her present position. But then life holds one as in a cage.

She described herself as Mrs. Avery, a war-widow, but I doubt if she had ever been legally married. She was one of the minor casualties of the War. She had lost her father, a gallant officer killed on the Somme. Being illegitimate, she had known him only so far as respectability permitted. But he had been kind to her by fits and starts, and had paid

for her schooling. After his death, she had nobody and there was no more money forthcoming. She took up nursing, and was—quite willingly—seduced. Her lover was killed a few weeks after his success. Her child was born and died, after the Armistice, in a public hospital. At this point, she changed her name from Jane to Joan; it sounded infinitely more distinguished.

After that experience, Joan lived as best she could. She was pianist in a troupe of pierrots; she had one or two chorus jobs on the stage; she was a "dancing partner" in a night club, and a "dancing instructress" in a disreputable "school." Increasingly, she became dependent on money from men, but they were all of them birds of passage. No one seemed to want Joan for long. This was depressing to her self-esteem and bad for her *morale*. She was not tough enough for mechanical prostitution. She was too lazy for hard work at an honest job; besides, she could not escape from the ruthless tentacles of the life into which she had drifted. Then, suddenly salvation was vouchsafed to her. A small and very ugly Japanese came for dancing-lessons to her "school." Having reached a state of dissatisfied indifference, Joan made herself agreeable to him, when the other girls were laughing at him and calling him "the Toad." He turned out to be a distinguished naval officer on an important mission in England, a man of character and charm, good-natured and humorous. He made such progress with his dancing that very soon Joan danced into a pleasant little flat of her own, where she lived under Captain Saito's protection. She was so lazy that she was almost quite faithful to him, and she acquired an excellent reputation in Japanese circles in London as being *otonashii hito*, a "no-noise

person," *i.e.*, well-behaved, considerate, harmless, safe. Moreover, her musical gifts shed lustre on the Captain's bachelor parties. She would play "Swanny" and "Ukelele Lady" and other favourite tunes, while the Japanese sat round smoking large pipes, and drinking strong whiskies against each other and feeling very English indeed, until the whisky overcame their refinement. Then there would be a call for Captain Saito's *samisen*, and either he or one of his friends would start a weird staccato accompaniment on this long-shafted three-stringed banjo. A queer wailing song would burst forth or a clownish dance would begin, and, the company having evidently migrated in thought to their native country, Joan would tactfully steal from the room and leave them to it, chattering and jabbering in their outlandish language, until at some late (or early) hour her lord and master drifted unsteadily back to the conjugal bed. Joan was not unhappy, for the Captain was a good-natured companion. She was conscious of being stared at in public for consorting with an Oriental, but she comforted her vanity with the thought that her Captain, though he looked like a monkey, was in fact a *samurai*, a gentleman of good birth and keen discrimination, that he associated with real admirals from the Admiralty, to whom she was introduced as a real lady; and they, in turn, treated her, Joan, with the dashing courtesy of the British Navy and gave themselves far less airs than the commercial travellers and nondescript crooks whom she had known in the bad old days. Meanwhile, the Japanese community had approved of Joan, and had marked her down for high promotion.

When Count Matsumoto's valet, Hanjiro, began making discreet inquiries with a view to discovering

a suitable *mekaké san* for his illustrious master, Joan Avery was the obvious choice, especially as Captain Saito was on the point of returning to Japan. She therefore found, as those who deal with the fatalistic Orient must expect to find, that her future had been arranged without herself being consulted in the matter. Tacitly, she acquiesced. She knew that one of the other Japanese would take her over when Saito left England. She wondered vaguely which it would be, but she did not care much. She was physically and mentally and morally lazy. She preferred to be chosen, rather than herself to choose.

Saito departed with a smile and a joke and a generous present (a wrist watch for remembrance and a cheque for practical purposes) and she was still living on this gift when an obscure but useful Japanese of the shopkeeper class called to convey the not-unexpected message that one of Captain Saito's friends, who greatly admired Miss Avery, had "made a hope" that she would be his friend now that the Captain had gone away.

"Who is he?" asked Joan.

"He is very more rich than Captain," said the emissary.

"But do I know him?"

"He is very more young and smart."

"Is it Hayama?"

"He is of very more high class and quite swell gent."

"Is it Kawakami?"

"He says he buy you a fine flat in smart place, and woman servant and motor-car."

"That's just bluff; they are none of them rich enough, I'm shore—unless it is the Ambassador himself."

"Do you say, Yes, miss?"

"Who is he? I must know first, then I can tell if he means what he says. Some of them are just joking and laughing all the time."

"It is Count Matsumoto," said the Japanese, impressively.

"A real Count! Oh, my!" exclaimed Joan, forgetting her refinement, but unable for the moment to fix her new admirer in the list of her acquaintances.

It was arranged that she should wait in Hyde Park on a certain seat on a certain afternoon, and that a Japanese whom she might or might not know would come and speak to her. She must not mention Count Matsumoto's name. It might not necessarily be the Great Man himself. The conversation would probably be about indifferent matters; it would not last very long; the Japanese would leave her without making any definite promise or proposal; but later on she would learn what had been arranged.

"It is very swell chance for you, I know," said Pandarus San.

Everything happened as he had foretold. The wait in the Park on a delicious spring morning; the young Japanese who suddenly took shape out of the nameless mob; the courteous apology for intrusion; the brief conversation about the weather, about London, about holidays in the hills and by the sea, about motoring; the invitation, not for that day but for a day early in the following week, if she would not mind meeting him at this same spot, at ten in the morning (too early? no!); he would take her to Brighton or anywhere else that she might prefer. Yes, rather! What fun! She would be there! Then, excuses, apologies, farewells—and he was gone! He was gone in a Rolls-Royce! Oh, wonder! It must be Count Matsumoto himself—

young, handsome, rich, smart (he wore a brown suit and overcoat and a soft brown hat), gentle, considerate, amusing, adorable! Pandarus San was right; it was a very swell chance for Joan Avery. On the strength of it she went off to buy a trousseau from one of those enterprising little shops that do not expect cash down, but will take risks on a girl's chances. Joan did not wish to appear before her new lover in a dress which he might associate with the Saito days. She had learned that from the Japanese. Besides, she felt like a new dress, anyway.

So Joan became the mistress of a Living Buddha and obtained almost everything that the world can give—except the unobtainable. A vast change from the rough and ready Bohemianism of Saito. She had a luxurious flat, a personal maid, a country cottage, a motor-car (with chauffeur), an expensive fur coat, a string of real pearls, and a Pekingese dog—all paid for out of the subscriptions of poor, foolish people in Japan who believed that the merits of her Matsu could ransom them from Hell. But, of course, Joan did not know this. She never asked where the money came from. There was plenty of it, that was certain, and her lover was very generous with it. He gave her, unasked, all that he thought a smart woman ought to possess. Had she been through a thorough course of gold-digging, she might have got much more. But she was so overcome by this downpour of unfamiliar prosperity, that she neglected her opportunities. Instead, she went off at a tangent and in the wrong direction! A man, she thought, a young man, too, who treated her with such generosity and who was so unfailingly kind and flattering to her, must be in love with her. If in love with her, then he could not live without her

(as indeed he had so often said); and then, if he could not live without her, he would one day marry her (he had never yet said this). Countess Matsumoto! A palace in Tokyo! Rolls-Royces everywhere with coronets on the door-panels, low bows from shop-people, full-page portraits in the picture papers, and presentation at Court!

It all seemed quite near to Joan as she lay in her lover's arms in their deep-nested Parisian bed. If only she could have clipped on to her bewitching little nose those spectacles which see the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, she would have realised the impossibility of her ambitions. But she has no sense of distance or perspective. She had had sufficient education to nourish her conceit, not enough to teach her the precise limits of her place in the universe. She was a lady of great importance in her own eyes, and she lived in a novelette world, where it was quite in order for oriental potentates to marry penniless girls for the sake of their charm and beauty. She considered herself to be Matsu's consort, not his mistress; and she had already begun to hint to her few acquaintances that a secret marriage had in fact taken place and that she was indeed Countess Matsumoto.

Matsu did not bother his head about the individuality of the girl whom he kept for his pleasure. She was his English mistress, an object rather than a person. She did not intrude upon his existence, any more than a dog or a cat would have done. She was dependent on him, and he was independent of her. He came of a nation which regarded woman as inferior and subject to man; he had been nurtured in a religion, which is unexpectedly ruthless in regard to woman, treating her as a spiritually stunted being, as a creature unclean and dangerous.

The priesthood of Matsu's sect were not necessarily celibate. They took wives and lived in the secular world. Their doctrine was that salvation was for all—even for women—through faith in the Saviour's name : "*Namu Amida Butsu.*" But the Buddhist's innate contempt for and mistrust of women underlay their charity. It could hardly be expected, then, that Matsu, Japanese, Buddhist and aristocrat, would have any deep personal regard for an insipid little English girl of the prostitute class, whom he kept for his sensual satisfaction. But how could Joan understand an explanation so derogatory to herself ? Besides, weak as she was, superficial as she was, yet she was unconsciously preparing her revenge upon her lover's free-handed contempt. The strength of the weak is surprising and significant, especially in bringing about catastrophe and ruin. Joan Avery broke down the last barriers of her master's aversion to Western women. She undermined his mistrust ; she conquered his unfamiliarity ; she separated him from his own race to an extent which three years at Oxford had been unable to accomplish. In Japan, the woman always yields. She may get her own way, but she gets it through by-ways. To pit her will against the man's will is unwomanly ; it is not done. But the English woman meets her man on equal terms. Her soul is as good as his. Her will may be the stronger ! The lists are open ! Let the better man win !

Joan was no champion, but she was by no means convinced of her inferiority to Count Matsu. Quite the contrary, since she was an English girl and he was only a Jap, obviously it was a condescension on her part to live with him. So, she held her own against him, and he did not always get his own way ; and, strange to say, this opposition began to

fascinate him. It added a zest to his *liaison*. One was never quite sure.

"With money it is easy to buy a woman," he explained to Whitelock, "but these English women are so independent. They can sell their bodies, and yet not sell their hearts or their souls. They are so strong, I fear them."

"Joan does not strike me as a very strong type," replied the tutor, who had met the lady and had found her lamentably *ordinaire*. "She's just the usual little bit of fluff." He might have hesitated to criticise an Englishman's mistress, fearing the reactions from his sentimentality. But there was no such danger in talking "love" with Matsumoto. His realism was refreshing.

"She is like a soft sweet with hard nuts inside. Sometimes I break my teeth."

"And that hurts?"

"No, it amuses me. She seems not to think, but she has thoughts which I cannot follow with my mind. I watch her face, but it is too pretty, it tells me nothing."

"Will you be sorry to leave her when the time comes?"

"Not her, so much, but all English girls. I shall pay her money and she will be happy. Pitiful, pitiful, it is so sad to part. *Partir c'est mourir un peu.*"

Matsu had accomplished his first London season. Though suffering acutely at times from lack of confidence, he had enjoyed himself on the whole. He had enjoyed his dances; he had enjoyed (not so much) his dinner-parties. He had been tolerated by the men because of his excellent tennis, and respectable golf. He had been successful with the ladies because of his soft eyes and pleasant manner, his faultless

style (rather too diffident, perhaps) and his exotic title. He might have pushed his successes more daringly, had he not been terribly fearful of a rebuff. Even so, Lady A—B——, a notable and comely lady, who believes in extending her conquests throughout the five continents (a kind of amoristic imperialist) had taught him, almost perforce, that he need set no limits to his ambitions, nor imagine that there was any racial discrimination against him. This discovery, though flattering to his manhood, was a shock to his aristocratic instincts, for that sort of woman (she is a duke's daughter) does not do that sort of thing in Japan. Moreover, it seemed that every one knew about her weakness (or strength) in love, and that no one thought any the worse of her because of it. This, too, was strange. Joan Avery and other women kept by the Japanese in London were far more modest and proper than this high-born nymphomaniac. So, having prevailed with Lady A—B——, he subsequently avoided her—much to her amusement.

"I have violated his virginity," she told her friends, "and he will never forgive me."

One evening, at a dinner-party that preceded a private dance, he again found himself next to the Honble, Sheila Mannifold—in silver sequins—"like an Arctic princess" said her friends; "like a super-sardine" said her enemies. They had much to talk about, since he found that she knew Bourchier and all the characters there and the college gossip and the more printable of the College jokes as well, if not better, than he did. She had a pleasant, natural manner and a far-away musical voice with delightful confidential tones in it. Matsu knew (from the picture papers) that she was a famous beauty and one of the smartest of the Smart Set, but fortunately

he had not at first realised her identity, so he had talked with her quite easily and had found her less pretentious than is the average society girl (especially in evening dress). He danced two dances with her after dinner, until she thought that he was becoming too persistent, and then gracefully she discarded him.

CHAPTER V

"DARLING Sheila is so vivid!"

"So vital!"

"So intense!"

"She vibrates!"

Three young women and one young man, all of them dressed up to the latest standard of elegance, were discussing Sheila Mannifold in her famous Mayfair "studio." The hostess had not yet arrived; they were entertaining one another.

"Basil, dear, you know the secrets of this house. Can you pull off a cocktail?" asked a tall dark girl in black and white, with a little black helmet hat fitting close over an "Eton crop." She was Lady Millicent Hawley, *alias* "Xenia," recently married, more recently divorced—out of tune with a world which was (momentarily) hesitating to pay for her very costly maintenance.

"Sheila keeps her secrets amazingly well," said Basil Perivale; fair hair, baby face, tight "reefer" jacket, and broad "Oxford" trousers. "But I happen to know this one."

He slid aside a panel disguised in the frescoed wall, and there were the bottles and the glasses and the shaker.

"Everything except the ice," he said, and glided

out of the wicket in the great sliding door which closed one end of the studio.

"Is he Sheila's lover?" whispered one of the girls, a fair and fluffy little creature in the fashionable "three piece" costume of *beige* colouring.

"Oh, no," laughed Xenia, "he's more loved against than loving. Sheila uses him as a tame cat; that's all. He's good to run messages and he dances so sweetly."

"Oh, so that's all," said the fair one, disappointed. Her name was Wanda. She had only recently arrived in the world of high fashion, and she was intent on learning its gossip.

The big "studio" (it had once been the workshop of a famous artist) had been redecorated for Sheila in Louis XV. style. The walls were panelled; and a carved tracery of vine leaves and tendrils and grapes was interwoven with frescoes after the manner of Boucher. The room was furnished with a "baby grand," painted to match; with a long low table on which were strewn books, newspapers and magazines; and with a sofa and chairs and big cushion-settees grouped round the fireplace, over which was a famous portrait of Sheila in fancy-dress as La Pompadour. The rest of the room was bare and clear, ready for a dance at any moment, and in a corner was a standing gramophone also of Louis XV. design. It was a fine room in dubious taste, which must have cost somebody a lot of money. Now, Sheila Mannifold had no money to speak of. Her brother, Lord Mannifold, was a bankrupt. Her mother, the dowager, spent what she had in a struggle to maintain Aisco Hall on pre-war lines. She had nothing to spare for Sheila except her admonitions and her prayers. Sheila could, of course, exploit her celebrity as a society beauty in getting credit

from shops. With money-lenders she was less successful. As regards clothes, motor-cars, perfumery, wireless apparatus, even jewellery (especially jewellery of the "artificial gems" order) Basil Perivale could guide her towards a world of advertisement, where these things would be showered upon her gratis. But could she feed, and entertain, and patronise, and gamble and jazz all on credit, or all gratis and for nothing? No, in defiance of the Board of Trade figures, the cost of living seemed to be rising month by month. Coats of sable and chinchilla (so becoming to her fair beauty) were not given away for advertising purposes even by the most enterprising of costumiers. Somebody must pay—or undertake to pay for these things. And the ordinary annual entertainment expenses of Sheila Mannifold ran into five figures. She must have a financier somewhere; and if he paid her bills, what did she pay in return?

Her friends—her new friends, that is to say, for the Eton set of Bourchier College were splendidly loyal and would hear no evil of her—declared that she was kept by Lord Glenbrigg. It was an unpleasant idea. "Black Jack," he was so-called from his looks and the colour of his skin and the quality of his temper. He had been rich before the War; he was very rich now—so rich that he could afford every luxury, even this super-luxury of a super-mistress, a girl of aristocratic birth, of high social position, of transcendent loveliness, and of the most extravagant tastes. One never saw them together, and yet one felt that he was there. The shadow of Black Jack seemed to shamble after the swift dragon-fly figure of the incomparable "Angel," tainting the savour of her triumphs. Already, there was something vaguely *déclassée* about poor Sheila though she

was generally in the right places with the right people at the right time; though it was a *déclassée* age, when the so-called aristocracy had to resort to queer shifts and expedients in order to keep its rickety craft afloat. But in Sheila's case it need not have been necessary. Darcy Caldecott was rich in spite of the War. He would have given her everything she wanted, and he would have been proud to marry her.

"I'd sell myself to the Griesgram," said Sheila, alluding by nickname to another of the post-war magnates who was disporting himself in London society. "But not to you, Doddles. That would be too grievous to bear."

"Do you love some one else? Tell me truly, Sheila!"

"You're too rich, Doddles, and the others are too poor. It's all a question of money, of course."

"Oh, of course," said Caldecott, unconvinced, but Sheila kept sentiment at an arm's length except when dallying with Argentines on the Riviera. Then, it was in keeping with the scene. Arthur Fenwick, whom she almost loved, had left in despair for Kenya.

"Cut all this out," he had flashed at her, snorting contemptuously round the famous studio. "Cut it out; come with me to Africa; it's rough, but it's decent. This place is absolutely swinish, and the whole town's foul. How you can stand it, Sheila!"

He had never condescended to propose to her before, but now he flung his offer in her face like a challenge. He had no money at that time, though he might eventually inherit a castle, if it were not sold by then; but by his looks he owned the whole world. What a contrast to Black Jack! Ugh!

"You're too good for this sort of thing, Sheila—a *poule de luxe*, it's miserable! I can't stand it any-

way; and I am going to get out of it. Don't you ever feel like that?"

"Not a bit, Wix. You see I'm quite a success; and you are rather a failure."

And, with that flick of ruthlessness still scorching him, poor Arthur Fenwick was flung out into Kenya.

Thus did Sheila Mannifold in the days of her glory deal with those men of her own breed, who still presumed to love her. Thus did the shadow of Black Jack gather round her, casting darkness where there had once been light, but a darkness full of the luxury that women love and of the rich pretentious advantages with which they can dazzle other women.

The world of Xenia Hawley and Basil Perivale and Wanda fills the picture papers, but it is not really superior to Fenwick's Kenya or to Caldecott's north country estates. It is meretricious, vulgar and, in the end, boring. Not to Wanda perhaps, who had no other standards to judge by; not to Basil. But Sheila was different. She had a soul and a tradition. There was a family of fighters, rulers and rakes behind her, watching her antics. She had been idealised and adored *en masse* by a group of the finest young men of her time. She had been something more than a pretty woman; she had been a Queen of Beauty at the tournament of life. And now! "Just for a handful of silver she left us!"

Yet had she left us so utterly? She wanted to have the best of all worlds; that was the trouble with Sheila. Her old friends were staunchly loyal, and the old world of the country houses, the race-week parties and Scotland in August still swung open for her on its rather rusty hinges. Then there was this new world of night-clubs and jazz which stretched southward through Le Touquet and Deauville, to Biarritz and the new Riviera of

Juan-les-Pins and across the lagoons to the Lido and Brioni. There was the world of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits with its attendant capitals—Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, and Madrid. There was the Western world with its capital at Hollywood and its shopping centres in New York and Palm Beach. Sheila Mannifold had had a glimpse into all of them, and could step in a moment from one planet on to another, baffling pursuit.

"She's like summer lightning," suggested Basil, who was always refined and sometimes poetical.

"Too fast to be punctual, is that it?" snapped Xenia, who wanted to be fed on something that would satisfy without fattening.

"She's coming," said the young man, posing gracefully at the lofty studio window. "I hear the sound of her horn far off amid the glades of Park Lane. It sounds nearer and nearer. There! I told you, maidens! Is there any sweeter music?"

It was indeed a remarkable "tooter" which uttered a chord of three notes, and was easily distinguishable among the blasts and growls and lowings of the London streets.

"She is not alone!" Basil continued, as if he were a Greek Chorus. "A man is with her; a strange man; no friend of ours; a man with a brown hat and Argentinian manners, and, oh, horrors! in plus-fours. For shame, Sheila, for shame! Why do you nymphs choose your swains so badly?"

The oak doors glided apart—by an electric device—and there stood Sheila. It was not her way to creep in through her own wicket-gate. She staged her exits and her entrances. She wore a brown leather motor-coat over a "sports" suit of brown tweed.

She held her hat in her hand like a boy, and her waving sherry-coloured hair shone like a crown. It is absurd, of course, to talk about "the most beautiful woman" anywhere; this is mere newspaper nonsense to catch the eye of the mob. For feminine beauty is a matter of taste and fashion, and Sheila Mannifold's beauty would have been accounted too slight in a more monumental age. But for her period she was perfect, and as the ideal girl of her time she has been transmitted to posterity in contemporary portraits of her—Lavery, Orpen, and John. Very fair, rather pale, a schoolboy beauty, fearless, restless, inquisitive, she was a spirit of the age of the Feminine Revolution, which has followed after the slaughter of the men in the Great European War—a bloodless revolution in which no heads have been severed, though a good many have been lost.

"I've been playing golf," she announced, by way of explanation.

"With?"

"Matsu."

Looks of inquiry all round. Sheila's *dramatis personæ* formed an enormous caste, and this was a new name.

"Don't know Matsu? Well, you shall in a few minutes. He's putting things away. What! The little wandering Wanda. How sweet of you to be here! Such a delicious frock, too. And you Xenia, and you Pam, and dear little Basil—not unexpected, but very welcome. Now, you shall feed Matsu and talk to him while I bathe my dirty self. Here he is! Count Matsumoto. Here is Xenia and Pam and Wanda and Basil. No, you mustn't follow me to the bathroom; there are limits even here, but I'll leave the door open, just to stimulate your imagina-

tions and so that we can go on shouting at each other all the same."

Matsu seated himself rather rigidly on a cushion beside Xenia, who rose to administer a cocktail. His manner was rather too stiff and correct for these surroundings, but he was good-looking and anxious to please.

"I love that light *beige* complexion," said Xenia to Sheila later on when congratulating her on this latest conquest. "So original, yet so fashionable, it was like you to think of it, and it suits you, darling, so deliciously; a delightful contrast."

But, aside to Basil Perivale, she added: "This is Sheila's limit. Where does she find these creatures?"

"In the Zoo," giggled Basil.

Matsu's conversation did not extend very far. It was limited to his golfing with Sheila, but redeemed by his funny accent and odd oriental turns of phrase.

"I was beat," he said. "Quite beat. I lose all my best holes."

"You were keeping your eye on Sheila instead of on the ball, I expect," said Xenia. "She's rather scrumptious, isn't she, in her golfing attire?"

"Her play also is too good for me," said Matsu, refusing to be drawn; "her putt is too cool."

"It was his first day's golf since his accident," shouted a silvery voice from the adjoining bathroom, "or he would have beaten me easily."

Loud splashing followed and Wanda stole away to watch the snowy Sheila in her coraline alabaster bath reflected *ad infinitum* in the octagon of mirrors which formed the walls of that famous sanctuary—the *chef d'œuvre* of Black Jack's installation.

Matsu was beginning to understand that mixture of sensuality and devotion, of artistic glamour and of

physical desire which, focused through the lens of the strong individual personality of these Western women, can blaze up so suddenly into a conflagration of passionate love. Hitherto, he had been satisfied with any woman, more or less, to ease his physical cravings. Joan Avery was quite impersonal to him. She had made no impression whatever on his mind and soul. But the advent of Sheila Mannifold opened an entirely new chapter of experience—a chapter familiar enough to the anticipation of English boys, but as far removed from ordinary Japanese conceptions as a cornfield by Constable is from a rice-field by Hokusai. But the imitative genius of his race was carrying him forward, far out of his depth. He was on the brink of falling in love with an English girl in an English way—yet without the restraints and corrections which the English character supplies.

It had happened like this. He had been driving back to town, from Brighton, where Joan was disporting herself during an early spring season—not in his Rolls-Royce but in a small two-seater Renault to which he was not wholly accustomed. Along that tricky stretch between Dorking and Leatherhead, a large car suddenly shot at him out of a side-road. He swerved and struck a tree. The shock pitched his car into a fence which collapsed, and the two-seater rolled down a steep bank into somebody's park. The large car cast anchor above the scene of the disaster, and a girl jumped out, Sheila Mannifold. In the opposite direction a labourer was trudging home with a fork over his shoulder along a private footpath that crossed the park. Sheila called out to him: "Hi! Hi! Help!" The man reluctantly stopped and retraced his steps. If he had noticed the accident, he had judged it prudent to ignore it.

"'What are we to do with him ?" shouted Sheila.

"I must get home to my tea," came the answer.

But Sheila insisted. "There's been an accident. He's badly hurt." She pointed at Matsu, who lay motionless on the grass, a nasty trickle of blood running down his forehead.

"Is he dead ?" asked Sheila, aghast. Indirectly, she was responsible for this, and she was in dread lest once again she had brought disaster.

"He may be dead, or he may be alive, I can't tell," was the answer.

Mastering her loathing of blood and pain, she knelt down by Matsu and began to bind her white silk scarf round the big, bleeding wound on scalp and forehead. It must have hurt, for Matsu winced and groaned.

"He's not dead, he isn't !" said the countryman with an air of profound discovery.

"Where's the nearest hospital ?" asked Sheila.

"At Leatherhead."

"We'll put him in my car and drive him there."

"I mus' get 'ome to my tea," said the labourer. However, he consented to help in carrying the unconscious Matsu as far as the high road and in disposing him on the broad back seat of Sheila's car, which fortunately was a large Rolls-Royce, spacious and comfortable.

One is bound to take some interest in a person whom one has nearly killed. This casualty, moreover, was a young man, a foreigner, quite good-looking in his way. Besides, Sheila had nothing much in hand at that time, so she conceived it to be her duty to call at the hospital every day, every other day, perhaps, to inquire for her victim. On the first day, she learned that he was Count Matsumoto, a Japanese. On the second day

she bumped into Whitelock, who had just been hearing about her from his wounded pupil. He had decided that the accident of the rescue was more dangerous than the actual smash. He remembered the George Cardew affair, and even apart from that tragedy, he considered this woman to be the Ill Fortune of that "damned Etonian set." She made him tremble in all his complexes, and he foresaw nothing but grief for Matsu from any relation with her. Besides, she had a way of looking at him as if he did not exist.

"Miss Mannifold," he said, unsteadily.

"Yes," replied that fresh, untainted voice. If Whitelock was going to fight and rout this woman for the sake of his pupil's peace of mind, he would have his work cut out for him. Poor Matsu was already sore stricken.

"She is beautiful as the sunshine," the Japanese had told him; "and she is of the highest nobility."

He had never heard Matsu speak about any woman in so full and expressive a tone. He reminded him of the story of George Cardew, but it had no effect. Perhaps he would have better luck with the lady.

"My name is Whitelock; I was Count Matsumoto's tutor at Oxford."

She grasped his hand with a naturalness of gesture that disarmed.

"Tell me all about him—yes—here—now!"

There was a bench on the hospital lawn under a lilac hedge in flower. Thither went Whitelock to his first discomfiture. Within half an hour or so, Sheila had elicited all that he had to tell—the Oxford life of Matsu, the vacations abroad, Joan Avery and Maida Vale, the Living Buddhahood. This last was beyond her, and conveyed merely that he was of august family and boundless wealth.

Whitelock believed that he had artfully pictured his pupil as a worthless young waster of oriental morals and outlook, adequately supplied with the kind of women with whom Lord Mannifold's sister would hardly wish to compete—a hard and faithless young man on whom sentiment would be lavished in vain. Of course, he was completely bamboozled from the very beginning. He had started off on his explanation from a set of completely false premises. A fast young woman of the Smart Set, he thought, would play with Matsu, would waste his time and break his heart; probably for nothing in return, possibly for a night or two of hectic embraces. Then deception would follow, disillusionment, contempt, and the effect on Matsu's pride would be disastrous, perhaps fatal. Whitelock remembered the tennis failure and the episode of the short sword. This would be much worse. So, with a qualm of conscience, he laid special emphasis on the Maida Vale establishment.

"Rather old-fashioned, don't you think, Mr. Whitelock?" said the cool spring-like voice, "and awfully boring. Have they got a family?"

"Not yet," barked Whitelock, savagely, "but I suppose sooner or later—yellow babies with slit eyes."

"They're darlings!" said Sheila, mellifluously, to the don's increasing annoyance. One of his complexes was twitching with agony to find how conventional he was. "If he is so fond of domesticity, why doesn't he get married?" she added, showing her whole hand so calmly that Whitelock did not trouble to count the cards.

"I suppose they are getting some illustrious personage ready for him in Japan."

"They'll be too late," said Sheila again with that

perfect candour which Whitelock was to denounce later as the depth of deception. It never struck him at the time that Sheila was already in love with Matsu—quite simply and straightforwardly in love, thinking of him not merely as a lover but as a husband, wondering whether he could afford her, whether he would *do*, or whether she had better banish all further thought of him from her mind for ever. Whitelock's account (she smiled at its mild malevolence, its calculated bias) was reassuring. Matsu was rich, very rich, of high birth, a gentleman by breeding and education, clean, wealthy, passionate and generous, but simple-natured, easily led, affectionate, a pleasant husband, a delightful father.

Full sail ahead, then, to catch the favouring wind that springs from a romantic meeting, from a sense of providential pre-arrangement, in the pleasant season of convalescence, with an English summer (set steady for once) lavishing its beauty for lovers' entertainment! The problem was too simple for Whitelock's solving. He was a man of intellect, looking for complications and subtleties everywhere. He found Sheila very subtle. Here is his note on this first meeting:

"Honble Sheila Mannifold, Lord Mannifold's sister, famous Society beauty—having exhausted every sensation that London life can offer seeks new thrill in pursuit of our poor Matsu—oriental savours to tickle her jaded palate. Something *new* and sensational at all price—however dangerous. And this is love! Yet the Honble Sheila is not only beautiful to look at, but quite simply so, not painted or very little, no airs and graces, direct boyish manner like our Eton freshmen, charming voice—'beauty born of murmuring sound.' *Corruptio optimæ*

pessima. A confusing woman, would fascinate a weak, impressionable man. They say she is kept by old Lord Glenbrigg, the shipping magnate."

In spite, or perhaps because of his complexes, Whitelock himself was not insensitive to her charm.

CHAPTER VI

SHEILA MANNIFOLD having made up her mind, the situation developed with the startling rapidity which was characteristic of her. Her only doubt was whether the occasion called for a big society wedding or whether she should confront the world with a *fait accompli*. She decided on the latter course, it was more in keeping with her style. The crisis came after an evening's dancing at the Miramar, that discreet yet temperamental night-club on the furthest promontory of Pimlico.

"You dance quite nicely now, Matsu," she had vouchsafed to her partner. Her praise, as always, went straight to his head.

"Yess—no! Then it is you who make me."

"Do you remember when I said you were a robot?"

Of course he remembered. He had not known what the word meant. He had asked Whitelock, who said, "a mechanical dummy."

"Then I kill myself," he had answered to his tutor's astonishment.

"Why?"

"A girl has called me so," he had answered, very bitterly; but the name of that girl he had kept to himself.

"We don't kill ourselves in England," said the

don, "because some tart calls us names. If so, there'd be none of us left. You must keep that high punctilio for Japan."

Matsu had felt that he was being a fool, a new discovery made once or twice of late and for which he was indebted to his English education.

"But how not to be a robot? You tell me that!"

"Squeeze the girl tighter, let yourself go, tell her that she is the most beautiful thing on God's earth, and that you are going mad for love of her. You can see how it's done on the films."

"Yess, that is good idea," said Matsu.

He had practised on Joan Avery in the flat at Maida Vale. Poor thing, she had been quite overpowered by this sudden ardour, following on a time, too, when her lover had been rather evasive. But now he had gripped her wrists and gazing deep into her eyes, had half-hypnotised her with:

"Darling sweet, you are most beautiful thing on God's earth, I am shoo-ah!" Then she knew that her hold over him must be growing day by day and (still more effectively) night by night, and that before long she would be recognised by the world (yes, and by the Court!) as Countess Matsumoto. She took him to her arms with a passion which she had never felt before and which rather alarmed him. A month later she suspected that she was pregnant. But in the course of that month much had happened.

There was this dance at the Miramar, for one thing.

"Lady Sheila," whispered Matsu in the depth of a discreet yet provocative alcove, "You are the most beautiful"—he could not say "thing" to this angelic being, so he left a blank—"on God's earth."

"Matsu, Matsu, do you really feel as badly as that."

"I love you so much; I think I go mad for you."

"Can you say that to me in the country?" asked Sheila, standing up. She was veiled, rather than dressed, in white and silver. A *tennin*, thought Matsu, a "heaven-person," an "angel." He, too, started up and caught her by the wrists, just as in his practice with Joan; only Sheila quickly wrenched herself free.

"I say it everywhere, always, to everybody, if you like: I love you, I love you, I——"

"Matsu, quiet; you can't make love like that in a London night-club; it isn't done. Come down to the country with me. There's more space there!"

"You ask me, Lady Sheila, you ask me to come," gasped Matsu, incredulous.

"Yes, of course, are you coming?"

"Yes—when—how—who also?"

"Now—in my car—I'll drive you."

"But it is impossible—my dress—my suit—my pyjamas—my brush—my valet—I have nothing!"

"No, this is love for nothing to-night, Matsu! None but the brave deserve the fair. I'm going, anyhow; are you coming? It's your last chance—now or never! Going—going——"

And she edged away from the alcove.

"But where you go to, this midnight?"

"To my cottage on the river near Sonning—thirty miles drive in the moonlight, alone with Sheila Mannifold. Not good enough, Matsu, well, good-bye; go back to your pyjamas!"

"But I come, Lady Sheila; of course, I happily go to Hell for you."

"But this will be heaven, Matsu," she answered with a smile that seemed to promise everything. At least, so Matsu was beginning to think. But as they circled round the dancing-room she whispered:

"Cut in to Basil Perivale's dance, take that girl away from him (her name's Tony Warner)—he won't miss her."

Matsu "cut in," as directed, but the message in its entirety was beyond his telling. All he could say was:

"Miss, I am sorry for you; I leave you now, also Mr. Perivale; we go away with Miss Mannifold; we sleep with her in the country to-night."

He left Tony Warner gasping.

Half an hour later they were speeding down the Bath Road in Sheila's Rolls-Royce, a gift of course from Lord Glenbrigg. Matsu sat beside his hostess as she drove, silent as fate. He wondered whither she was driving him. Was he her accepted lover? What was expected of him next? Or was this just a joke, a caprice, a midsummer night's dream? Matsu liked that last phrase. It sounded scholarly and poetical. He thought it worthy of being offered to Sheila.

"This," he said, "is like 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'"

"I thought it might be," said Sheila, and quoted ambiguously:

> "So you may have me as a dream doth flatter;
> Asleep a king, but waking no such matter."

Therewith she stepped more firmly on the accelerator, the great silent car shot ahead into the darkness, and conversation languished.

At about two in the morning they reached the cottage at Sonning. A voice, feminine and aristocratic, was heard at an upper window:

"Who's there?"

"Same to you," answered Sheila. "What's that?"

"Thank God it's you, Sheila; I thought it was those awful cat burglars. I'm all alone here."

"No servants then!" wailed Sheila.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Swann is here. I mean I haven't got a man to fight for me."

"That's unusual, Xenia. However, I have got Basil here for you!"

"Well, he's better than nothing. I'm terribly lonesome. Wait a minute. I'm coming down—in my slumber-suit."

Lights sprang from the windows of the doll's house cottage, showing something of the gravel of the drive and the dark shrubbery surrounding it. The night air was warm and laden with the scent of flowers, syringa prevailing.

"*Ma! Utsukushii!* (beautiful!)" exclaimed Matsu, breaking into his native tongue under the influence of motor-drowsiness and the mirage of the moment.

Lady Millicent Hawley was standing at the hall door in light blue pyjamas, her dark hair as smooth and short as a boy's—she looked like the cox of an imaginary Eton eight.

"Is there anything to eat?" asked Sheila.

"Foie gras sandwiches and champagne. I have been living on them for days. I've been so miserable, Sheila darling, can't you guess?"

"I'll leave the car at the door; it won't rain."

"But don't you want to know," screamed Xenia, "why your best friend is here, in your house, uninvited, and *alone* at two o'clock in the morning? You're too selfish for words, Sheila!"

"I never ask questions. It's Freddy, I suppose?"

"It *was* Freddy, but it never will be again. For three days it was heavenly, and then we had an awful row. I threw him out of your house!"

"Good for you, Xenia! What was it about?"

"Not before these young men. It would corrupt their innocence." Lady Millicent seemed to identify Sheila's escort for the first time. "Why, heavens, Sheila; you've got the *Samurai* with you! Is it as bad as that?"

"Not yet; this is a trial trip; don't scare him away! As you *are* here, do something useful; get us some food."

They flopped into low deck chairs in a kind of loggia, outside the white and simple drawing-room. The river, *moiré* under the moonlight, rippled sentimentally beyond a sloping lawn. On the further bank, a clump of elms stood gigantic and motionless with stars in their branches. The scent of the syringa seemed appropriate to the occasion and to the company. Basil (changed into somebody's flannels) served the sandwiches and the wine, which might advantageously have been cooler. Matsu had been provided with a *kimono*—white *crêpe de chine* with large Chinese characters indicating good luck and long life, sprawling over it in blood red colouring. A white kimono suggests funerals to a Japanese, and Matsu had taken it reluctantly.

Everybody was sleepy except Xenia. They yawned shamelessly at the interminable narrative of her adventures and misadventures.

"Very well, if you're so damned bored," she said, at last, "I'm going to bed; and what's more, I'm going to take Basil with me."

"Lovely Lady Millicent," said Basil, rising and bowing low. "I am overwhelmed by this favour!"

"Not much of a favour," said Xenia. "You can be comforting without being rude. Besides, *c'est pour encourager les autres*," she added, maliciously, glancing at Sheila and Matsu, "pleasant dreams, you two!"

They were left alone.

Matsu was completely bewildered. His Japanese conventionality had no clue to a situation like this. Not thus, not thus did the *mousmés* of his acquaintance carry on in Tokyo or Kyoto. Certainly not among the strictly guarded daughters of the aristocracy; certainly not in the *geisha demi-monde*, where deportment has its observances even in the midst of the orgy. Among queer bohemian bolshevik students, perhaps. But these English girls had style. Their game had its rules, though they baffled Matsu completely and could scarcely be defined even by the leading players. Their licence was not mere piggery, so Matsu (a clean-natured little fellow) was not disgusted; he was merely confused—and not a little fascinated, too. Left alone with his hostess, he rose and advanced towards her with that strut which proclaims that a Japanese is resolved on a mighty deed of valour. In that snowy white kimono which he wore so gracefully and naturally, he certainly was very good-looking.

"We sleep also together to-night?" he inquired, with logical frankness. "Yess—no?"

"Good God, no, Matsu;" the clear voice seemed to come to him out of a white cloud of desire. "I'm not like Xenia; I don't sleep with everybody; I've never slept with anybody."

"Then, why did you bring me here to-night?"

"I don't know—just for fun," answered Sheila, quite untruthfully.

"Shall I go?" asked Matsu, breathing deeply, as Japanese are trained to do in order to restrain emotion.

"No; stay here; it's too late; I want you."

"Why then?"

"I don't know, I don't know; I love you, Matsu; and I don't know what to do."

Out of that cloud of desire came the clear outline and shape of a tawny-haired girl in cream-coloured *crêpe* pyjamas, her face buried in her hands, her body shaken with great sobs. Matsu was on his knees at her side, with his arms about her. Real emotion had shattered the make-believe of that incredible night.

"For God's sake, be good, Matsu!" she was sobbing. "You can have me, if you want me, but what's the use, when I'm all weak and rotten. Matsu, Matsu, let me go!"

But she made no effort to free herself.

"I do just what you say me," said Matsu.

The Honble Sheila Mannifold, the "Angel of Audley Street," idol of London Society, and goddess of that Eton set which had treated him at Oxford with friendly contempt, now in tears of hysterical surrender in his arms, begging for love and begging for mercy!—What does an English gentleman do in such a moment of embarrassing triumph? What is the code of Bushido? What are the obligations of a Living Buddha? No answer from the books of rules. Matsu had to fall back on his instincts and emotions. His passion for physical possession of this gold and silver girl was great; but his pride was even greater. And his pride made him generous. If she could surrender, he could surrender, too.

"I love you too much to hurt!" he said, very gently and with great dignity.

The moment when he could have held her unresisting was over. Her crisis was past; her sobbing was stilled.

"Thank you, Matsu," she said, very simply.

Then she stood up, but her lover remained squatting, Japanese fashion, at her feet.

"Matsu," she said—calm, collected and mistress of herself, "you love me, don't you?"

"I go mad for you, Lady Sheila, I love you so;" this time he was unconscious of using Whitelock's *cliché*.

"And I love you," she continued, in an undertone; then, raising her voice, she asked, "Would you marry me, Matsu?"

Marriage in Japan is not arranged thus directly between boy and girl. It is a matter for family negotiation in which the actual contracting parties have but little say.

"Don't make a mistake, lover," she was saying, "I am not bargaining. I love you, and you can take me to-night or another time, if you want me like that. But if we really love each other, it would be cleaner to be married!"

Matsu rose from his knees and fronted the woman who now held him by something stronger than his passion.

"I will marry you," he said, swallowing with a gulp of resolution the Johoji Temple and most of the rest of Japan. They were very far away from him at that moment, but he was not wholly unconscious of them. Perhaps he reflected something of his background towards Sheila.

"You will take me away," she said, speaking softly and fixedly. "Take me to Japan—anywhere. I'm sick—sick—sick of it all; there's nothing in it, nothing in any of them. I want something quite new—and quite different."

"Japan is very different, Lady Sheila; you will think my country very barbarous—I'm shoo-ah!"

"I shall love Japan," she said, and her hands laid upon his shoulders closed about his neck, "because I love you."

They melted into an embrace, none the less passionate for its restraint and abnegation. This was something beyond the experience, or the anticipation, of either of them. It engulfed them in an ocean of blessing, and all sense of time faded away.

Summer lightning flickered across the lawn and behind the elm trees. It aroused Sheila from her stupor with an echo from *Romeo and Juliet :*

" Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
Ere one can say ' It lightens.' Sweet, good night,
This bud of love by heaven's ripening breath
Shall prove a beauteous flower when next we meet."

" Good night, lover," she said ; " you'll sleep here to-night, on the sofa, it's quite comfy. I shall be upstairs. If you want anything, shout out for me. I'm sleepy, and very happy—for the first time ever, I think. Kiss me again—just as you did before."

But it was not quite the same.

Matsu, left to himself, to the syringa scent and to the ghostly lightning, could not sleep. He was stunned and confused by this sudden impact—the physical and the spiritual force of it. The unexpected power of the spirit over the body, as shown in this spoilt Society girl, as reflected in himself. It was beyond the range of all former experience in Japan or in Maida Vale or elsewhere.

" *Kore mo ai daro,* (perhaps, this may be love !) " he repeated over and over in his own vernacular, until the repetition of that one phrase drove away all possibility of sleep. He arose, and strutted up and down the room, then out into the garden, up and down the lawn. In the gabled house above him, behind one of those blank, open windows, Basil and

Xenia were asleep in each other's arms; behind one of those other windows his Sheila was sleeping alone.

"*Kore mo ai daro.*"

At the bottom of the garden behind a clump of shrubs he shed his kimono, then stepped off the bank into the river. The bottom was muddy but it was fairly deep, so he struck out across the stream paddling dog-fashion as the habit is in Japan. Then he floated on his back amid the reflected stars, wishing that the current would carry him on and on into eternity, unwilling to face the upstream struggle against the eddies of life. Better thus, since all living is vanity and all loving is sin. Bound upon the wheel of existences innumerable, what escape is there from the burning mansion of illusionment?

"*Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!*"

The only escape from the burning misery of life and from the cold agony of death, is in repetition of the Saviour's name; such had been the simple and efficacious message of Matsu's famous ancestor, Matsumoto Genson, six centuries ago. It had brought comfort and hope to millions of poor human insects, toiling through life and wondering what was the good of it all:

"*Namu Amida Butsu.*"

And he was Matsumoto Choson, born into Buddhahood, and he was young and strong, and he was a Japanese—"a citizen of no mean city"—and he was beloved by a famous English beauty, the daughter of a family as noble as his own, and she had offered herself to him for love's sake, and for love's sake he had spared her, being noble and a gentleman both of England and Japan. Surely life was good to him, very good.

"*Namu Amida Butsu.*"

He struck upstream again in the teeth of the current. As he stepped ashore, the dawn was beginning to glimmer in the East.

CHAPTER VII

XENIA and Basil Perivale were bundled out of the cottage next day with little ceremony. As it was almost lunch time before the party yawned itself awake, they were allowed as a special concession to feed before their departure. Sheila then drove them to Reading station, leaving Matsu behind on the lawn, dressed in some one else's flannels, of a size too large for him. From Reading, his hostess rang up to tell him that they had found no suitable train, and that they were going to motor on to London. Matsu, wearied by his emotions, made no protest.

"Shall I wait here?" he asked. "Or do I come to London? Yess—no?"

"Be a dear good darling and stay put—just where you are. I'll be back this evening. Pleasant dreams to you. Bye, bye!"

But from London, she rang up again to say that she had a hundred and one things to attend to. "Really, *very, very* important." She must stop the night in London, and she would be back *very* early next morning—"before you're awake, darling."

Japanese have an oriental faculty for waiting. Matsu was not greatly distressed—except about his clothes. He wished to look his best, and in these white flannel trousers of unknown origin, rolled up voluminously round the ankles, he knew that he looked ridiculous. So, he rang up his servant Hanjiro in his London flat and sent minute instructions as

to the garments which were to be packed and sent to him at once in his own car.

"But Joani San go away in motor-car; perhaps she go Brighton."

This mention of his mistress ruffled Matsu.

"I will give her the car, then," he thought. "But I will never see her again; that person is becoming troublesome."

Hanjiro was instructed to send the clothes with a hired car. Late that evening, they arrived—with Hanjiro.

"He has come to spy on me," thought Matsu, and this was undoubtedly true. Matsu's recent activities had been a source of intense interest and considerable concern to his servant, who, while readily conceding the Maida Vale establishment, had been aghast at some of his master's more recent outbursts and absences. He had reported to a certain person who had been living very quietly in an obscure London suburb ever since the Living Buddha's arrival in England, that his *Danna Sama* had been behaving in a manner which he could only describe as *kichigai* (crazy), that his manner was changed and his temper uncertain, and that perhaps some woman (not Miss Avery) was at the bottom of it. The certain person wrote to the Vice-Abbot of the Johoji, advising that Count Matsumoto be recalled to Japan at an early date, and that arrangements should be made for his marriage and for his future establishment, since his English studies had now progressed to a point little short of perfection and it was undesirable that he should become forgetful of his own country. Hanjiro was further instructed to observe Count Matsumoto's way of life most carefully and to keep a watch on his correspondence.

He had been unsuccessful hitherto in probing the secret of the alarming change in his master. Both his curiosity and his sense of duty were exasperated to the last degree. Then, suddenly, this telephone message after a night's absence offered a solution of the whole mystery. So, naturally, Hanjiro accompanied the suit-case on its sudden drive to Sonning.

He was well scolded for his pains. He was called *baka* (fool) and other epithets, which although mild enough to an English ear, are unseemly on the lips of a living Buddha ; and he was sent back to London with a flea in his ear. But it is written that a Japanese servant shall obey the best interests rather than the express orders of his master. He, therefore, alighted from the motor-car at a short distance from the cottage and returned on foot in the direction of the river. On his way he had noticed a public house of discreet and retiring aspect. Thither, he repaired for refreshments and information. Considering his limited English, he was remarkably successful in his inquiries. He learned that the Honourable Miss Mannifold was tenant of the cottage, and that there had been " goings on " there all the summer, " something terrible " with motor-cars " buzzing around " all times of the day and night, and " jazzing " on the lawn with next to no clothes on . . . " brings their own wine with them, and that's the sort we get down here nowadays."

Hanjiro—he was a small, chubby man, intensely respectful in manner and having a tiny moustache like a single black wire—returned to the cottage and crept into the garden, where he hid. It was now almost dark, but he could see his master lounging in a deck chair on the verandah, smoking that pipe which was a sign of his attachment to English ways. After

a time he rose and walked slowly down the lawn to the river bank, took off his clothes, stood there for a moment, a pale shadow in the darkness, and then plunged. Seized by a sudden fear of suicide, Hanjiro ran with little caution or concealment down the garden ; but when he got to the river, he could see his master floating quite serenely down stream and could hear him singing to himself :

" If you love a Ukelele lady, Ukelele lady love you ! "

The Living Buddha, therefore, was quite pleased with life.

When he emerged from his swim, he did not trouble to put on his clothes, but ran naked up to the house, still singing. Hanjiro inferred that there were no other guests, and he had already learned from his inquiries that the only servant in the cottage was Mrs. Swann, an elderly cook-housekeeper. He saw a light appear at an upper window, and the head of Count Matsumoto look out for a minute or two into the garden. Then it was withdrawn and shortly after the light was extinguished. Hanjiro, reassured, returned to the boat-house, where he lay down in a punt and slept until dawn.

Early next morning, he was once again hiding among the shrubs, and at about half-past eight he heard the chord of a motor-horn sounding from the lane outside the cottage. It was no ordinary horn and certainly it was heralding a further act in this drama. Sure enough, the drive-gates were opened by a young man in a multi-coloured pull-over, and a sumptuous cream-coloured car glided up to the front door. A slim girl in a brown cape alighted. It was Sheila Mannifold. Hanjiro had already seen her once or twice, and had begun to suspect that here was the explanation of the mystery. She let herself

into the house with her own key. He heard her shout :

" Matsu ! Matsu ! Wake up ! "

But he could distinguish no more without risk of discovery. For an hour or more there was no indication of what was happening. Then, Count Matsumoto emerged into the garden, fully dressed in a light grey suit, Sheila, in the palest of pale blue, a heavenly Parisian garment, had hold of his arm. She was a shade taller than her lover, but they were a good-looking pair, so good-looking that Matsu's creamy-brown Mongolian complexion did not outrage his companion's flower-like fairness. She stooped down and picked a white rosebud, which she adjusted in his buttonhole with an affectation of keepsake coyness.

" That is correct for a wedding," she said. Hanjiro caught the last word.

He overheard a little—but not much—of the subsequent conversation on the lawn. It had to do with a wedding in " the sweetest little church close to here." " Not to be married in church is like not being married at all." " It's unclean." " The parson will be there at eleven." " Yes, I got a special licence from the Archbishop or somebody ; here it is." A rustle of paper and two heads close together and laughing with inane, excited happiness like drunken people. Then :

" Basil will give me away ; he has been doing it for years ; and the parson will produce two witnesses. I have fixed it all. I meant just to drive away from the church—just anywhere, without knowing where we were going ; northward to Scotland or southward to France—just as the road seemed to beckon to us. We'll take Basil with us. He'll be useful with the luggage, and he's better than any lady's maid.

But in London, last night, they reminded me. It's Lady Castleberry's Charity Ball at Claridge's. I'm a patroness; I've promised to be there; they've been advertising me. Hundreds of people will be there just to see me. I can't let them down. And then, the thrill of it—to be married all the time, and no one knowing! Just be patient, sweetest, one night more—just half a night. I'll jump into the car like Cinderella as the clock strikes twelve. We'll start at dawn."

They clung together, closely embraced, lovers unmistakable. Hanjiro from behind the bushes watched with growing alarm. This was no mere passing caprice, to which even Buddhas, when hereditary, are apt to succumb. Count Matsumoto was in the power of this woman, and she was planning some desperate act—an act which might shake the foundations of the Johoji and dislocate the faith of twenty millions of Japanese. All this happening on a lawn by the Thames; all this perhaps preventable by proper action on the part of Hanjiro! But alas! he did not know exactly what it was that he must prevent. He had better refer to higher authority. So he crept out of his post of observation and fled, half running, to Sonning village in order to telegraph, in a mixture of Japanese and English, to that certain person who had been living quietly in a London suburb ever since Count Matsumoto's arrival in England. Its general sense was as follows:

"Great danger from new woman—think they intend marriage—come at once in motor-car and stop him. Hanjiro."

An address was given—the name of the public house near the cottage.

By the time that the watchful manservant re-

turned—oh, so cautiously—to Sheila's cottage, the cream-coloured car had vanished from the drive, the sound of voices was silent in the garden, the birds had flown, Hanjiro was too late.

He took his courage in both hands and approached the kitchen door. There, in a wicker chair sat Mrs. Swann, a lady who had once been a lady, with a thin Voltairean face, and fine hands that used to play the piano—once. She was now a cook, and often a general servant as well, but she stuck to Sheila because life in Sheila's entourage was one long entertainment, and because she loved her.

"I seek my master, Count Matsumoto," said Hanjiro, by way of introduction and explanation.

"He's a little, sneaking, yellow beast," said Mrs. Swann emphatically. "Go away!"

"I am sorry for you," answered the Japanese. "I must see him at once. There is great business."

"There's a lot of damned hokypokey," agreed Mrs. Swann. There was a snap in her voice which jerked Hanjiro's nerves most disagreeably. "Why doesn't he go back to Japan and dance with his *geishas*? I suppose he's got a Jap wife there!"

"Oh, no, you wrong yourself, madame; he is young bachelor!"

"Well, he won't be a young bachelor for long," she said, looking at her wrist watch. "They'll be married in half an hour. I suppose you know that, Mr. Pooh Bah!"

"*Sa!* He marry now; it cannot, it cannot; it must stop!"

Mrs. Swann was amused at the evident anguish of this gnome-like little man. It was the first comic relief that had been granted to her that morning.

"Where? Where I go?" He was shouting,

advancing towards her with convulsive fingers as though he would choke the truth out of her. Mrs. Swann had been through the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and had faced more alarming manifestations than little Hanjiro.

"I'm sure I don't know," she snapped. "How do I know where Miss Mannifold goes to get married. 'Come along, Swanny,' she said, 'and be my witness.' 'I wouldn't witness anything so disgusting,' I answered. Then I was sorry. She looked such reproaches at me. There she is, throwing herself away on a heathen, a yellow man, a Jap. I thought it all a joke; she's always joking. But she's joked once too often, and this joke will have a bitter end. It's rude for me to talk like this about your master, Mr. Pooh Bah; but I'm so full of it all, I must speak to whoever will listen."

Hanjiro bowed politely.

"I understand," he said. "I am very sorry for you. We swim all in the same soup. My master, he also fool himself. He wrong himself to marry such English girl. It is great smash for him. He is more than Prince of Wales! He is God!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Mrs. Swann.

"Just so, Good God, I think," said Hanjiro, bowing again, "and now I get out. You excuse me, madame, and please not to say my master I am here."

So Hanjiro returned to the "Goat and Compasses." There was nothing for him to do until his principal or his instructions arrived.

CHAPTER VIII

No record remains of the marriage of the Honourable Sheila Mannifold and Count Choson Matsumoto beyond the entry in the church register and a photograph taken by Basil Perivale with Matsu's own camera, showing the bridal pair immediately after the ceremony—Sheila at the wheel of her car and the bridegroom with one foot on the step. There had been some delay, as a wedding-ring (it was almost forgotten altogether) had to be purchased in Reading. Later on, there was a lunch with champagne at one of those new hostelries near Maidenhead—an old country house *redivivus*, which (at a very high cost) provides food and dancing facilities for gilded youth and oofy middle-age, when tired of the monotony of the London night clubs.

After lunch, Sheila restored her husband to the cottage by the river under orders to be a good boy and to wait for her return in the small hours of the following morning. Matsu waited—once again. Mrs. Swann provided an excellent dinner, but she tried to question him. He did not like the woman's manner, and pretended not to understand what she was saying. Later, he took his evening plunge in the river, which was distinctly colder than usual, and so to bed!

He was awakened by the sound of a car in the lane outside the house. Sheila at last! His own, his very own! He slipped a blue silk dressing-gown over his pyjamas, and ran downstairs to meet her. As he was fumbling with the latch of the front door, he heard the smash of a window in the drawing-room. She was coming in that way; she never

did the obvious thing. He turned, crossed the hall, and half ran into the drawing-room, exclaiming :

"Sheila ! Sheila ! Darling !"

Hands in the darkness gripped both his arms, and a knee in the small of his back brought him to the floor. A cloth impregnated with a heavy, sweet, sickly smell was clapped over his face, and after a moment's struggle he was unconscious. He thought he could hear a telephone bell ringing.

"Sheila darling ! Yess—no ?" he gasped, and those were the last words he uttered on English soil.

It was Sheila, right enough, at the other end of that telephone. She was ringing up to say that she had met her brother, Lord Mannifold, at the Castleberry Ball, that he had heard the story of what had happened from somebody else who had heard it from Basil Perivale, and that she must go down to Aisco Hall, to her ancestral mansion, for breakfast and break the news to her mother. She would be back at Sonning for lunch. However, she got no reply to her ringing. Matsu was evidently fast asleep, and was tolerating her absence with oriental calm. She would do the same. This was to be a modern marriage, devoid of foolish flutters and maudlin emotions—daring and original, but calm and certain of itself. Something in Sheila's nature, too, was glad of an excuse to defer the agonising instant of surrender. It was inevitable, she knew, but could she face it ? She wished that Matsu had had the brutality to rape her on that desperate evening when she was all consent.

She slept for four hours in her flat in Mayfair. Her brother was there, and other people. Some of them were playing cards. None of them except Victor seemed to know about the wedding, and he was grimly silent.

"You've gone and done it, this time, old girl," had been his comment. "A Jap! Good God!"

They left London soon after eight the next morning, Sheila driving—out through Hoxton, along Lea Bridge Road, through Walthamstow and Leyton and Epping Forest to that curiously remote part of England which lies just beyond the forest boundary. There, at a park gates, neglected and rusty-looking, the car came to a standstill, and Victor Mannifold had to get out and open the gates, since no retainer emerged from the shuttered lodge. The park drive, between its magnificent elm tree avenue, was green with weeds, and the garden in front of the grey Jacobean house was something of a tangle. But an old grey-whiskered butler received them cordially with a special welcome to Sheila.

"Why, Miss Sheila, you're quite a stranger. It's a pleasure to see you, Miss, I'm sure, and I hope you're a-going to stay this time!"

"I'm married, Jenkins. I've come to announce the glad news. Is my mother in the dining-room?"

Sheila broke through the old servant's congratulations, and crossed the great hall to the panelled dining-room. Nothing ever changed in this house, and its changelessness in the midst of so fluctuating an epoch exasperated Sheila. It was not the changelessness which is based on great riches. The house and the family were in full decay. It merely shut its eyes and its windows and was slowly foundering. The indomitable will of old Lady Mannifold alone kept it afloat.

Lord Mannifold had inherited Aisco with the title when he was still a baby, but he had inherited no money with which to keep up his position. For this, he was dependent on his mother's fortune, which had barely sufficed for the purpose even in the spacious

years before the war. The war completed the ruin of Aisco. It was now quite frankly a pathetic spectacle—a noble old house, laden with a few good pieces of furniture and a great deal of family bric-à-brac mouldering away in the midst of a neglected park. It could easily have been sold, for it was within convenient distance from London and then Lady Mannifold and her children could have lived quite comfortably on the modest scale of the new poor, but the idea of " a flat " in London or " rooms " at the seaside was hateful to the old lady, who, being herself of inconspicuous origin, was determined to maintain untarnished the honour of the family which had elevated her, somewhat unexpectedly, to the peerage.

She had a long face like a horse, coarse-grained and parchment-coloured, and her style had stabilised itself some time about the beginning of the Edwardian era. Her grey hair formed a kind of heavy pewter-like halo round her high forehead, being kept in its place by a substructure known at the time as a " transformation." She usually wore black with lace, and garments that buttoned behind in the aggravating manner of the past. Her collar and cuffs were tight, and being very thin and wiry she had preserved her waist. Her skirts descended to her heavy bucolic boots. In fact, she allowed herself none of the liberations which her sex won from the great war. It seemed incredible that this hard, angular, *collet monté* woman could be the mother of the " Angel of Audley Street."

She sat at breakfast with her younger son George and with the Vicar of Aisco, the Reverend Anselm Lockwood, a very high Anglican, whom she supported in his defiance of his bishop. He was young and pale with deep-set eyes and a hungry look.

George Mannifold, fair, sleek and handsome, was on the point of leaving Sandhurst. He took the world as he found it—not a bad place, only he wished he had more money.

Sheila pecked a greeting on her mother's cheek, shook the vicar's clammy hand and nodded to George.

"I see the Castleberry Ball was a great success," croaked Lady Mannifold, after a few cold preliminaries.

"Devastating," said Sheila.

"And you both enjoyed yourselves?"

"Hugely," Sheila answered for her brother, with an awkwardness of manner and hesitation of speech quite unlike her usual self. Her mother's confidence was very remote from her, and she had to scramble over an array of obstacles in order to get even within shouting distance. It had always been so. Her brother Victor watched her with a loose smile. An unpleasant silence intervened.

"I'm married," she said, abruptly. "That's what I came to say. It'll be in all the papers this evening."

"Married?" exclaimed Lady Mannifold. "You bad, bad child!"

"Good God!" said George.

The vicar smiled fatuously, murmured something about congratulation and tactfully withdrew. The Mannifolds were left to discuss the situation *à quatre*.

"Who's the lucky man, Sheila?" asked her younger brother.

"Cheer up, Porgie," she flung back at him, "he's got plenty of money."

"He'll need it—with you. Is it that old brute Glenbrigg?"

"No, it's *not*," she snapped.

"Too obvious, eh? He's been keeping you for years, hasn't he?"

"Don't be a swine, Porgie. I've never been Glenbrigg's mistress, or anybody else's."

"Never said so, Miss Purity. I merely said that he has been keeping you—in the general sense of the word; I am quite ready to believe that you gave him precious little in return. That's the Sheila way!"

"I got you your car out of him, anyhow; so shut up!"

They had been scrapping together ever since they were children, but they were not such bad friends as their manner implied. George was nearer to his sister than were the rest of the family; he was cleaner than Victor and more amiable than his mother. Lady Mannifold was by now snivelling into a lace-bordered handkerchief.

"You might have told your poor old mother, Sheila—before this happened."

"It was beastly of me, mother, I know," said Sheila. "But it happened so quickly—all in a flash, as everything happens nowadays. Why? I haven't had time to sleep with him yet; and I came to tell you right away. So there's duty for you; I am not half so bad as they tell you!"

"Sheila you talk in such a dreadful way—before your brothers, too. And, Sheila, were you married in church?"

"Yes, a pretty little church, too. So we have God's blessing on our union!"

"Don't blaspheme, Sheila!"

"And he's got a title too. I'm a Countess."

Lady Mannifold stopped rubbing her eyes. George threw his napkin into the air and caught it.

For the first time there was a distinct relaxation of the atmospheric pressure.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed the pious mother. "I thought he might be a nobody. Is it Lord——?"

"No, I'm only a foreign Countess," admitted Sheila.

Enthusiasm slumped, but sympathetic interest was maintained.

"Tell them, Sheila, tell them the worst!" growled her brother Victor.

Sheila looked up at him, questioningly.

"Then I'll tell them myself," he said. "Mother, Sheila has married a Jap!"

"A what?"

"A Japanese, a coloured man!"

"He's charming, he's good-looking, he's a gentleman (much more a gentleman than you, Lord Mannifold), he's good at games, he's popular, he's got a title, he's very rich: why the hell shouldn't I marry him? He's much better than anything that either of you will ever get."

"But he's a *Jap*," groaned Victor. "It's such a comic thing to do."

"Sheila was always original; it's part of her make-up," said George; but he rose from his chair and coming over to his sister laid his hands on her shoulder. "Well, good luck to you, old girl," he said, "and good luck to the man who sleeps with you. He's a damned lucky fellow, anyway."

"Thank you, Porgie!" said Sheila; "and now your blessing, please, mother."

"I shall pray for you, Sheila, as I always have prayed for you; and perhaps God will hear a poor mother's prayers."

"Don't blaspheme, mother," said George, imi-

tating the bitter unction of his mother's voice. "Tell Sheila that you love her and that you'll love her husband for her sake. She may be a modern, but she's a human, too, damn it."

"I cannot do that, George; she is a bad child, she was always bad and she has deceived me once again; later on, perhaps."

Gathering her skirts together with a gesture of the past, the Dowager Lady Mannifold swept out of the dining-room.

Sheila shrugged her shoulders and asked her brothers for a cigarette.

"Well, that's that, anyway," she said. "Mother's hopeless; she's much too good to be true. And now, I must be getting back to my bridegroom. It was awfully decent of me to come and break it to mother, myself, but she never appreciates anything."

Snivelling in her great dusty library, Lady Mannifold complained to the vicar:

"My sons are good boys, but my daughter is bad, very bad. To get married—in that guilty way—without a word to us—and to a heathen, too—it's worse than adultery."

"No, no, dear Lady Mannifold," murmured her spiritual comforter; "rash, perhaps; headstrong, certainly; but sinful, no! She has married in church and with God's blessing; she seems to be truly fond of her husband, and he is a person of position in his own country. All will be well, dear lady, all will be well."

Outside the porch, with the basilisks of the Mannifolds prancing over the mullioned doorway, George and his brother were discussing the situation, the emotional Jenkins well within earshot.

"She's torn it this time; she's gone and torn it," groaned the head of the family.

"Wait and see," said the younger brother. "It sounds rather wild; but Sheila's no fool. She has had to keep herself, and she has kept herself damned well; you and I aren't in the running with her."

"It's Glenbrigg who has kept her."

"Never mind how she's done it. She's been damned clever about it."

"But she has disgraced herself; she has made our name stink."

"She has over-scented it, perhaps. But she is wise enough to know that she has been on dangerous ground. So, she thinks she had better right herself and marry while the going's good."

"But a Jap, good God, a Jap!"

"If it had been the Comte de Blague or the Graf von Donnerwetter, we should have thought it quite a good match for Sheila; and why should a Japanese Count be so much worse than a French or German one?"

"He's yellow, he's heathen, he's comic. Why? I remember him at Oxford—a ridiculous little blighter!"

"Sheila says he's good-looking. She's not a bad judge; and it appears that he is rich. Do you remember anything about that? It's an important point."

"Yes, plenty of money. He used to keep a harem at Abingdon."

"Then he'll suit our sister top-hole. Cheer up, Victor; you're still the rotter of the family."

Sheila emerged from the hall, gauntleted and fierce.

"Talking about me! Bad cess to you!"

"You're amazing, Sheila—and divine," said George; and he almost meant it.

"I have finished with you lot, anyhow, thank God! You've got minds like flies!"

"Buzz, buzz, Sheila! A pleasant honeymoon, to you; and don't drive him to *harakiri*! Bye, bye, Countess!"

She was away down the drive, churning up the weeds and dust in her wake. She was away to the river and to her lover; and her family and old Glenbrigg and the rest of them could go to blazes! She was free at last as she had never been free before; or at least, she thought she was free. Aisco Hall had been the prison of her girlhood. Even now those grey walls numbed her spirit with the chill of those early years. The place had never seemed to be properly warmed—not even in the height of summer. And it was in this atmosphere that she had spent her lonely childhood, between the cold house and the still colder church, oppressed by her mother's ill-timed religiosity, tended by transient governesses, herself in charge of two little brothers a few years younger than she, remote from other children—since girls' schools were considered indelicate and unsuitable. The war saved her—the women's war, which the women won! It saved her from mouldering downward with Aisco Hall. It made of her "the Angel of Audley Street," the loveliest girl of her generation. As a nurse in a great base hospital in the North of France, she learnt what life is—its joys, its sorrows, its passionate intensity, its sudden calms, its queer hypocrisies and the reasons therefore, its cruelty, its courage, its tendernesses. Her physical beauty and her strange, swift character were appreciated at once by the men and women who knew her in France, and by the end of the war her reputation was made—for good and for evil. She was one of the girls who counted in London society. She had completely outgrown Aisco Hall, whence her mother watched

her giddy progress with increasing wonder, with portentous misgivings, and—eventually—with a crazy kind of antipathy.

Sudden blinding light after years of sepulchral darkness is apt to be too violent a contrast for sight and mind. Sheila lost her head, not once nor twice, but many times. Good luck had saved her from squalid ruin—but it was not merely her luck, for there was a fund of common sense in her and a strength of character, which had so far held her citadel inviolate. Her amazing vogue had surprised her; so had the slow but steady slump which followed poor George Cardew's death. She found that after all she was still in prison, a prison perfumed and cushioned, a prison de luxe, with gilded bars and jewelled fetters, with occasional periods of liberty (hence those wild careerings abroad) but with little chance of permanent escape. And the faces of her fellow-prisoners haunted her—the Xenias, the Wandas, the Basil Perivales! Was she, the Angel, the inspired and inspiring, to degenerate into one of these flame-obsessed, bewildered butterflies—she who had always been her own mistress and no one else's.

The story of that French actress, who fled from a hectic life of gaiety, to the quiet and stillness of a convent appealed to her. But would not that end in yet another prison, more deadly than any which she had yet experienced? Her mother's religiosity had made her mistrustful of all religions. Marriage within her own set was unthinkable! It would set the seal on her damnation. Marriage with one of her beloved Oxford boys was unthinkable! If any of them were to take her now, he would be taking her out of pity—haunted by unspeakable suspicions about Glenbrigg and others.

It was in this desperate mood that she had met her Matsu in the promising circumstances related above. Such a meeting was bound to lead further, if she let it ; and she had decided to let it. To her Matsu meant escape. He was the visible embodiment of worlds elsewhere. Her choice was not a reckless quest for originality, still less desire for self-advertisement. She had had all the advertising that she was ever likely to want. She wanted something different now, and she had found it in Matsu. *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.* Matsu offered a sudden and unexpected solution to all her difficulties—money, position, escape, love. Yes, she loved his physical beauty and she longed for his embrace. And why not ? Race prejudice, she had none whatever. A beautiful man has beauty, whatever may be the colour of his skin. An educated man has education, and an aristocrat has his aristocracy. Matsu had all the qualities required in her mate. Her brother, in talking about him as though he were a nigger, only proved himself to be a boor. She loved her Matsu, and she was proud of him. She would be proud to bear his children—one, two, three—not more than three. Even three would play old Harry with her perfection ; and even with one she would be back in prison again—the nursery-prison. But that prison would be happiness to her ; she wouldn't blight her baby's chances as her own mother had done for her ; he would start off (for he was to be a boy-baby) with an ample fill-up of joy. For joy is the petrol of life.

Such were Sheila's dreams as she sped along the network of cross-roads north of London, avoiding the great city itself, and dropping down at last into the Thames Valley *via* Beaconsfield, Taplow and Maidenhead. The clue to the whole situation was

that she really loved Matsu and was in love with him. Nobody could recognise this simple fact. The "Angel" was regarded as being too modern, too brilliant, too notorious to fall for so simple an emotion. And a Japanese, too! The whole affair was fantastic, another of her notoriety stunts; but this was going rather too far. Mistress of a profiteer was bad enough, but wife of an Oriental, impossible! She had definitely ostracised herself this time. She was done for! What a calamity! Such a lovely girl! But heartless, mercenary and dangerous! She was well out of the way! Like Helen of Troy, where'er she went she had brought disaster. Do you remember the tragedy of poor George Cardew?

Heads were already nodding and tongues were wagging over the sensational paragraphs in the mid-day papers:

ROMANTIC WEDDING
OF SOCIETY BEAUTY

Such were the announcements on the newsbills.

JAPANESE COUNT
AND SOCIETY GIRL

"At the pretty village church of —— the Honourable Sheila Mannifold, who has been considered by many to be the Most Beautiful Girl in London society, was married very quietly to Count C. Matsumoto of Japan. No sooner was the ceremony over than the Count and Countess motored to London in order to take part in Lady Castleberry's Charity Ball, etc., etc."

With characteristic inaccuracy the papers proceeded to embroider on Basil Perivale's meagre account of what had actually happened. Fortunately, as events turned out! For if the reporters had

tumbled rather earlier on to the Sonning clue, the whole story of the bridegroom's disappearance might easily have become a nine days' wonder in the Press.

As it was, Sheila returned to the cottage towards tea-time, hungry and dusty, longing for her Matsu and her food. She was met in the hall by Mrs. Swann —unusual; for that "queenly bird," as Basil used to call her, more often remained on her nest in the kitchen. There was no sign of Matsu. Stranger yet, Mrs. Swann spoke before she was spoken to.

"He's gone," she gasped.

"What—Matsu?"

"Count Matsumoto. He's gone. They came last night in a motor-car, and they took him."

"What do you mean, Swanny? He's gone away on business. Didn't he leave any message, any note?"

"Not a word from him, and not a word on the telephone all day long, until Lady Millicent started ringing up just now—congratulations and all the rest. A bit too soon, I'm thinking, for any congratulations!"

"But what do you mean—they took him?"

"The Japs. They've kidnapped him. They were hanging about yesterday morning; and last night they came in a motor-car, and took him. I heard the car. I thought it was you coming back to him, or some of those others. How could I dream it was *them*. I just turned over and went to sleep. The next morning I could feel the silence in the house. He's gone, I thought to myself, he's gone, and *they've* taken him. His bedroom was empty and his suit-case was gone with all his things in it. Nothing else. So it wasn't the cat-burglars. No, it was *them*. Oh, dear, oh, dear, Miss Sheila; it's all my fault."

"No, it isn't, Swanny. That's nonsense. Why should they want to take him?"

"I don't know, I don't know. It's all queer and creepy. It comes of having anything to do with those yellow Chinese. They're not like us. I've seen them on the pictures. They're all wrong. They didn't like him marrying you. He's something more than human to them, you see. They say he's God."

The rigid Mrs. Swann collapsed on to a sofa and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER IX

THERE were five or six people who read the sensational news of Sheila's wedding with more than transient interest. One of these was Baron Hotta, the Japanese Ambassador, sitting frock-coated and cross-legged in his imposing study in Grosvenor Square. Another was Lord Grenbrigg, the shipping magnate, who happened to live in the same square. A third was Miss Joan Avery, who was just returning from Brighton to her flat in Maida Vale. A fourth was Arthur Fenwick, home from Kenya, who happened to be lunching with his friend Darcy Caldecott in a St. James's Street club.

"*Ma! Sore wa komaru n'da!* (Ah! That's troublesome)," grumbled the Ambassador, as he rose to telephone for his counsellor.

"The damned little bitch! She's fooled me!" swore his lordship, and he mixed himself a very stiff whisky.

"Hell!" screamed Miss Avery. "And me with his baby—blast him!"

"Poor little Sheila!" said 'Doddles,' who was rapidly become blasé and aimless. "She's gone right off the rails."

"We must wish her luck," said 'Wix,' "and stand by in case of need."

Another person who was intimately concerned by this surprising news was Professor James Whitelock of Bourchier College, Oxford. He held out the newspaper as though to focus its incredible paragraph, and could find no adequate comment beyond a prolonged whistling through his teeth.

These six people all thought that they ought to do something about it, but it was difficult to know what to do and difficult to locate the leading actors in the drama. Miss Avery, in a crisis of hysteria, was the first to get going. She rang up Matsu's bachelor flat about which she was supposed to be in ignorance, but there was no answer. She rang up Miss Mannifold's flat—not knowing Miss Mannifold except from her pictures in the society papers and feeling that if she could get her on the 'phone, her hatred would scratch her rival's eyes out through the receiver. But again there was no answer. Then in an agony of despair, she threw herself on to the bed, where she had learned to love her Matsu.

"My God! My God!" she groaned. "What the hell am I going to do? God blast the little skunk! Lover, lover, why have you left me?"

Having cried her eyes dry, she put her appearance in order, and hailing a taxi, told the driver to go to the Japanese Embassy. A large car, with cockaded chauffeur and footman, was waiting at the curb. His Excellency, too, had decided on action. As the door opened for Joan, she could see a spruce little Oriental adjusting his grey top hat in the distance beyond the flunkeys.

On being asked her name, she replied, in raised tones:

"Countess Matsumoto!"

The little grey figure stiffened at the name, and advanced to meet her, hat in hand.

"I am Baron Hotta. You wish to speak with me. Good. I wish to speak with you also. Please, come this way."

He ushered her into his study, and carefully closed the door.

"My dear young lady," he said, "I am sorry, very sorry to tell you. You must have courage, much courage for what I have to say. Have you courage to bear?"

"Yes, tell me, for God's sake. I'm all a-tremble."

"Your husband has gone back to Japan—very sudden—this morning!"

Joan glared at the Ambassador for a desperate moment, during which it seemed that she was going mad. Then, she screamed wildly five or six times, so that the Embassy servants gathered round the door, and the Ambassador rose and begun very slowly to retreat. But to his relief, his visitor did not leave her chair. She remained seated, rocking her face in her hands and groaning:

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Gone and left me—without a word! The bloody little skunk!"

The language and bearing of the unfortunate lady were a surprise to His Excellency, whose opinion of the self-control of the British aristocracy had stood very high. "Like Japanese *samurai*, those English girls," he used to say. He made allowances, however, for so terrible a shock to the girl's feelings on the very day after her marriage. She stared at him with a fierce intensity, and said:

"I've got his baby coming, by the end of this year."

So this was the reason for such unseemly haste in the wedding of the Living Buddha—a complica-

tion which had never occurred to His Excellency and a further blow to his high estimate of those *samurai*-like English girls.

"I am very sorry," he said, gently. "This is most hard to bear."

"I'd never have had the baby, if I wasn't shore he'd marry me," explained Joan. "And what shall I do now? What will he do for me? Cleared off to Japan and left us in the soup."

Baron Hotta was under the impression that he had met Miss Mannifold somewhere at some function or other. He had certainly seen photographs of her in the papers. Here was one—in the day's *Evening Standard*—no great resemblance to this thin-cheeked, tow-haired little person with the manners and diction of the lower middle classes.

"I was just about to go to your mother's house—to explain myself to her!"

"My mother! Why? She's dead—years ago!"

"You are then *not* Miss Mannifold?"

"That damned bitch! What is she to him anyway? Is she going to have a baby to him, too? I shouldn't wonder, I'm shore. But I was the first; I have the right to him——"

She was becoming suddenly voluble, and the Ambassador interrupted her, sternly; he was beginning to see daylight through the fog.

"You are not Miss Mannifold and you are not Countess Matsumoto. You are not his wife; you are his mistress. You are impostor to me."

"We are married in the sight of God. He is my lover; I love him; he is everything I love!"

"It is sad," said Baron Hotta, relenting; the girl's sincerity disarmed him. "But it is so. There is no help. He is married, it seems, to other girl; and now, he go away to Japan——"

"Then I go, too," said Joan, rising from her chair. "He can't fool me like that. I'll show him what's what."

"It is no good for you to do that; in Japan he is more far from you, even than here."

"Why?"

"Because in Japan he is a kind of God."

"Oh, rot; you're fooling me. Then what about that other woman?"

"I think she is very far from him, also. But I shall go now and speak with her mother. You may give me your name and your address. If this is a true story you tell me, we must see, we must see."

So poor Joan was disposed of and dismissed from the Embassy.

Lady Mannifold was a far more formidable problem. Baron Hotta had little experience of these more intimate aspects of English life. This diplomacy was new to him. He knew English ladies only in their most smiling and superficial moods. He had had an unpleasant half-hour with Joan. For his interview with Lady Mannifold he decided to take his counsellor, Mr. Kurino, with him.

To a Japanese mind, which is so sensitive to external impressions, the aspect of Aisco Hall was most forbidding. The apparition of Jenkins was reassuring, a fading hallmark of nobility, but the severity and gloom of the family tea-party in which the Ambassador and his supporter were called upon to share, were worse than his anticipation, Lady Mannifold with her terrifying "transformation"; George Mannifold with his cynical "good form"; and the vicar, apologetic but unaccountable.

"Yes, Baron Hatter," Lady Mannifold was saying, "you suggested an interview regarding my

daughter's marriage. Do you take milk in your tea, Baron Hatter?"

"Is Miss Mannifold perhaps at home?"

"No; she is not here. And cream, Baron Hatter?"

"I have a serious talk for her, and some bad news to say, I fear."

"I suppose the Count is married already?" suggested George.

"Not so bad, not so bad," said the Baron. "But you must tell her that Count Matsumoto has gone away this morning to Japan."

"Poor old Sheila," murmured George, "left at the post." He rose from his chair and began to pace up and down the room.

"Shall I retire?" said the vicar.

"Of course," snapped the mother of the Mannifolds.

George, with all the confidence of twenty-one years, was lecturing His Excellency.

"Do you mean to say, sir," he fumed, "that this little sneak has fooled my sister into a secret marriage, and has now thought better of it, and cleared off to Japan without a word of explanation to her, and has left her to bear all the publicity and misery of an outrageous scandal; and that you, sir, have come to us with this story only now when it is too late."

Baron Hotta was not afraid of the wrath of young men; it was the women in England who perplexed him. He closed his eyes to mere slits, and asked:

"You think, then, this marriage is good thing?"

"No, sir, we do not; we think it a bad thing. But my sister is free to make her own choice, and whomever she chooses I shall see that he treats her properly."

"If it is bad thing," said the Ambassador, quietly, "then more better it stop quick. Count Matsumoto must go back to Japan at once for urgent affair. If he is once in Japan, then he never come back to England, I think. He forget all this. Miss Mannifold too forget. They make divorce, and start again quite new."

It was then that Lady Mannifold cast her brick into the troubled waters.

"I do not approve of divorce," she said, "it is against the principles of the Catholic Church."

"In Japan, we divorce very much," explained the Ambassador. "We think it very good thing if marriage is not good then to divorce it. Not difficult at all and no scandal. Japanese Court will decree there is no marriage at all, as Count Matsumoto was not old enough to marry without consent of relatives, yet he marry so without consent. But of course," he added, hurriedly, "he must not leave his wife to starve herself; he must do something good for her."

The twin grins of the two diplomats were making brother George very angry.

"Are you suggesting, sir," he exploded, "that my sister is not good enough for Count Matsumoto and that she is to be pensioned off like a servant? You are quite wrong, sir. She has made a damned bad choice in marrying a—a—foreigner, whom we know nothing about, who may be an adventurer—without a penny—who is quite unpresentable—who has nothing in common with us—and precious little in common with her. It is a hateful marriage, a horrible marriage from our point of view. But, damn it all, a man, whatever he is, must do the decent thing, and to leave a girl without a word on the very day of the marriage, that was the

act of a coward, a sneak, a contemptible cur, unless——"

George Mannifold did not finish the sentence, but it had suddenly occurred to him that the bridegroom might have been kidnapped, and that this Ambassador fellow knew all about it. That was the sort of trick that Japs would play.

Matsu was probably still in England, perhaps a prisoner in the Japanese Embassy. He must make it his business to find out. The Ambassador, meanwhile, was grinning again. What the devil had he to grin about? His only comment at the end of George's tirade, was:

"But this marriage cannot be!"

"And why?"

"It is difficult to explain Japanese customs to foreign people; but it is so. This Count Matsumoto is chief of a great family of priests—Buddhist priests; so he is regarded with great respect; he is almost like royal person. Like royal person he is not free to marry whom he wish."

"My sister is quite good enough for any royal person."

"Yes, but Japan is different. Japanese people mostly not used to foreigners. Suppose Archbishop marry my daughter. She is quite good enough for him, but you say, 'What a bad marriage! A Japanese heathen girl with a leader of our church!' It is like that."

"What a blasphemous comparison!" said Lady Mannifold. "I can bear no more of this nonsense."

She rose from her untasted muffin, and the interview appeared to be at an end.

"I am very sorry for you, Lady Mannifold," added the Baron as he rose to take leave. "I

thought I must bring this bad news myself, and if possible to see the sad young lady——"

"There is not much sadness about my sister," interrupted George. "Archbishop or no archbishop, if she wants this fellow, she'll get him!"

And as the Embassy car jolted down the neglected drive, he added:

"And why the devil shouldn't she get him, if she wants him?"

Opposition has an amazing effect on the Englishman. It broadens his mind. It stretches it far beyond its customary capacity. It will make him espouse the most surprising causes, and act in flat contradiction to what would have been his normal will. By the time that Baron Hotta took his leave, George Mannifold was a strong supporter of his sister's outrageous marriage, and he was more than ever certain now that Matsu had been kidnapped.

Lady Mannifold and the vicar had retired to the private chapel to pray. Lady Mannifold hated her daughter too cordially to wish for anything but a complete humiliation for Sheila; but naturally she wanted to keep it out of the papers.

CHAPTER X

MEANWHILE, in her cottage at Sonning, Sheila Matsumoto—since this was now her name—was faced by a situation that required prompt action of various kinds; but she was too bewildered as yet to know what she ought to do. Something untoward must have happened since Matsu was not in the place where she had left him. That something had been so sudden that he had not been able even to leave word for her. Mrs. Swann's story of the

kidnapping seemed to come from the films rather than from real life—poor Swanny was like that; her brain was undependable. Perhaps he had met with some accident—no, the disappearance of the suitcase was evidence of a degree of deliberate preparation. Perhaps he had had an acute attack of "cold feet." She ought never to have left him after the wedding; that was trying a man's patience too far.

She rang up Matsu's official flat in London; no reply. She did not know the number of the unofficial one. That damned other woman! Perhaps she had whistled her lover back to her. Sheila had never imagined that such competition could be in the least serious. Was she not the "Angel of Audley Street," the loveliest and most charming creature of her generation? Still, old mistresses have claims on a man, and trouble from that quarter might account for Matsu's silence.

She rang up Whitelock at Oxford, but she could not get into touch with him.

She picked up a novel which Basil Perivale had left behind him. It was called *Passion Inverted*, and was about young men at Taormina. At no time was she a great reader, and the sense of this story, if there was any, merely blurred in front of her eyes.

She heard a motor hooting down her lane and a pause in front of her gates. Matsu, of course! How silly of her to be so "windy"! The car was a dark-blue Daimler limousine, with a coronet on the panel. Somehow, it did not look like Matsu.

The door opened, and Lord Glenbrigg emerged. He strode into the cottage without bothering about any formalities of anouncement. After all, hadn't he paid for the place? Sheila retreated into the

garden. "Black Jack" is a person whom one prefers to interview with plenty of air and space around one. In a small room, he seems to use up the atmosphere.

He wore the characteristic grey tail coat and the square grey hat, so familiar in caricatures. The inevitable red carnation glowed in his button-hole. Over it glowered the dark face of gun-metal hardness, almost square, with bushy eyebrows and big protruding ears. Not a man, but a gorilla! So his enemies—and there were many—used to say. His beginnings had been obscure. Yet he had risen to be controller of more than half the shipping of the British Empire. The Scottish title, the great modernised castle of Glenbrigg, the pipers, the pibrochs, the kilts and the rest of it were elaborate attempts to cover up the well-known fact that His Lordship's name was John Briggs and that his origin was apparently Welsh. He was a widower with no children, and Sheila Mannifold was, next to his shipping, his dearest possession in the world. "Dear" in a double sense; yet to him, she was well worth the expense. "Possession," because in his simple philosophy, what he paid for was his. Sheila was his, just as his racehorses and his prize cattle were his. That silly journalese *cliché* about the "Angel of Audley Street" had got lodged in his otherwise perspicacious brain. He saw Sheila as an angel of purity, uncontaminated by the filthy world around her. He called her, in his rare, pathetic and ill-expressed love-letters, "angel-face," "angel-child," "virgin-sweet," "heaven-love," "*madonna mia.*" Incredible but true! He believed (against the arguings of his common sense) that Sheila had never had a lover. So certain was he of his lady's chastity, that he had never shown any signs of being

jealous. The young people of both sexes who fluttered round Sheila, had seemed to him too insignificant for notice. Besides, she was his possession. He had purchased her. She could not escape from him; nothing, which he had purchased, had ever escaped.

Sheila was so miserable that she was almost glad to see him. Here was something solid and stable in a world that was beginning to reel around her. However, she showed no *empressement*. She collapsed recumbent on a long wicker chair on the verandah—a pathetic little slip of a figure, with reddish-golden curls, over her "sports" costume of the fashionable *beige* kasha cloth. You can't hit a woman when she's down! Even "Black Jack" realised this; it made him less violent, but more grumpy. He advanced to the middle of the verandah and assumed the stand of one who expects explanations.

"Well?" he asked, as the explanation failed to mature.

"Well, nunky," sighed the prostrate one. An avuncular relationship was supposed to exist between them; that was the working hypothesis of their friendship.

"Not so glad to see me as usual, eh?"

"Much more glad than usual, as it happens. You're a bad psychologist, Lord Glenbrigg; sit down!"

"Am I going to be introduced to your husband?"

"No, he's not here."

"So he's not living in my house. That's mighty considerate. Where is he?"

"Gone away!"

"Where to?"

"I don't know."

"What have you done, Sheila? Is this all a newspaper stunt? Or what? Are you really married, or no?"

"I'm married right enough. Do you want to see my lines?"

"What ever did you do it for, child? And why didn't you tell your old nunkle a word about it? It wasn't playing the game, you know. It wasn't cricket!"

Lord Glenbrigg's metaphors were as heavy as his head.

"I did it because I loved him—there!"

"A Jap! It's disgusting! It's throwing beauty to the beasts."

A vision of physical possession flashed across Lord Glenbrigg's imagination. It stung him out of his chair, and he began to stamp up and down the verandah. Sheila mentally compared that apelike figure with the lithe athletic Matsu.

"No, it's not disgusting!" she said. "He's good looking and charming and companionable."

"And has this Jap been your—your lover?" The physical question was still uppermost in the man's mind. His "angel-child"!

Sheila laughed.

"No—not yet; but that's an impertinent question, Lord Glenbrigg."

"It's straight and to the point. That's me! As long as you are flawless, Sheila Mannifold, so long will I be your friend—and no questions asked, save only that one impertinent one. The moment you've been with a man, you're no use to me. What use have I for a horse that's foundered, or for china that's cracked? Those are my terms; I've never put them so plain to you before."

"I don't want terms; you talk about everything as if it were business. I want somebody with character and stuffing in him to stand by me during a difficult time—that's all. I want a friend, nunky—very badly."

She did not know what she wanted—advice, sympathy, company, yes, and money, too, probably. But for the moment she wanted company more than anything else. She could not be left to herself in that lonely bower. She wanted a confessor, too. She wanted to tell her story to some one who did not matter. "Black Jack" did not matter much; he had always been rather a joke to her, and she was used to his heavy but solid ways of thinking. Besides, it was rather piquant to confess her love-story to her lover. She revealed a new Sheila to him—naive and affectionate, quite different from the flashing young *mondaine* who had first captivated him, or from the "virgin-sweet" of his senile dreams. By the end of the story, he was sitting close to her, with her hand clasped in his hairy paw.

"My angel child," he said, "it's no good; you must cut him out. Let him go back to Japan, or go to blazes. You can't have him; everything's against it. Let him go."

"If he has gone back to Japan, they've taken him against his will. I'm going to Japan myself to find him."

"Not worth it, little beauty. What good is he to you? Find a young fellow of your own sort, and I'll not stand in your way. I'll help you—yes—if he's got no money, though it wrings my heart to think of your body in his arms. There! But a Jap! You can't do it. It's unclean."

"Not to me, nunks. Let's be quite honest. He's far better in every way than the average man I've been meeting in London. Result—I love him. If he doesn't want me, let him tell me so."

"It isn't him; it's *them*. No Jap has a mind of his own. I know them in business," said Lord Glenbrigg.

"What do you mean—*them?*"

"His group—his family—his friends—his embassy, perhaps. No Jap is free to make his own choice. He has to go off and talk it over with his pals, and they decide for him. If they've decided against you—and they despise us white people just as much as we despise them—and if you go and run into their hornet's nest, God help you; they'll stick at nothing; and if you are in their way, they'll clear you out of it. It's tempting Providence for you to go to Japan."

Black Jack was on the wrong line of argument. To dangle danger in front of Sheila was the best way to lead her on. She never wholly believed in danger until she was face to face with it, except as a tonic—the very tonic which she most needed for her present depression and uncertainty. Her face shone.

"But how awfully exciting!" she exclaimed.

"I mean what I say, child; and I know them. I know them in business. They're queer little devils, but they're very formidable competitors. Their ideas are quite different from ours. They'll do you in if you stand in their way, and you can't fight a whole nation of them."

"Oh, but what fun it will be!" she cried, jumping to her feet. "Japan! Japan! How do you get there? You'll lend me a ship, a ship all my own. Why? You've thousands of them. Nunky, nunky, give me a ship!"

Her wild, hysterical prancing was interrupted by the scrunch of the gravel as a second large car manœuvred into the drive. Sheila stepped down into the garden. By peering over the bushes, she could see what visitors were coming, and then take appropriate action. So thrilled had she become at the idea of a dash to Japan in pursuit of a

kidnapped husband, that there was a ring of disappointment in her voice, as she exclaimed :

" Why, it's Matsu, after all ! "

She had recognised the big grey Rolls-Royce which Count Matsumoto used on State occasions. She ran back into the hall to welcome him, oblivious for the moment of Black Jack and everything else. The hall door was standing wide. The door of the closed motor-car was being opened by a chauffeur in livery ; but there was no Matsu. A woman emerged—a smartly dressed fair woman, whom she had never seen before.

" Are you Miss Mannifold ? " asked the stranger.

" Yes," said Sheila.

" Then, take that—and that ! "

A stinging smack on each cheek ; and a sudden retreat ! Joan Avery had wreaked her immediate vengeance on the rival whose name had become an obsession with her ; but when the deed was done she was terrified at her own audacity, and was on the point of flight. But her enemy stood there, stark still—a very beautiful woman, far beyond Joan's range of beauty ; her cheeks crimson red from the insult and the blow.

" Where is he ? " Joan hissed at her.

But Sheila did not answer. She was much too surprised.

The front door had closed in the face of the expectant chauffeur. There was no witness to this woman's duel ; the two had the low oak-beamed hall entirely to themselves. So Joan, who had apprehended a rush of servants to chastise her temerity, recovered courage and advanced a step or two.

" Where is he ? " she repeated.

" I don't know," said Sheila, quite gently and as

though oblivious of the attack. Perhaps she was hardly conscious of it. She had been so certain that Matsu was coming back to her out of that motor-car. She did not feel resentful; it was all too like a dream.

"Thoughtless of him not to tell you when he said 'Good-bye,' I'm shore."

Joan was talking to her in her sharp, acidulated accent. Sheila answered her in what was slightly more than a whisper.

"He didn't know. He was kidnapped. The Japanese took him away."

"And he's gone to Japan," the irritating girl went on in sharp, nagging sentences. "He's in a steamer going to Japan. The Japanese Ambassador told me so. The steamer left last night. I found it out myself. It's the *Fuji Maru*. Yes, write that name down: F—U—J—I M—A—R—U. Fuji Maru. A Japanese steamer going to Japan. He's left us here, his two wives, he's left us here and gone."

"Are you married to him?" asked Sheila.

"Yes," lied Joan; she was beginning to persuade herself that she was indeed Countess Matsumoto.

"Good God!" said Sheila. "Then what am I?"

"Nothing," said Joan. "He's just fooled you and cleared out; left you in the family way, I dare say; that's what he's done to me."

"Sit down," said Sheila. With this last blow she had recovered something of her self-possession. She knew now who this must be—the woman in Maida Vale, of whose existence Whitelock had told her. As for the silly creature being married to Matsu, that was an obvious lie.

They sat opposite each other on hard hall chairs—like a mistress interviewing a prospective servant—and they stared at each other across the oblong hall table for half an hour or more, while Joan told,

with rambling inaccuracy, the story of her relations with Matsu. Poor Joan! She was excited and voluble; she gave herself away at every point. Sheila listened with a show of sympathy. They became almost friendly; such is the way of women when united against a man.

"And where were you married?" asked Sheila.

"At the registery-office."

"But what registry-office?"

"Never you mind where. We were married all right. You can take my word for that."

At this point, the heavy cloud of Lord Glenbrigg's presence loomed up in the doorway which led through the drawing-room to the garden beyond. Joan was startled out of her life-story by the alarming apparition.

"Oh! So you're not alone!" she exclaimed, but Sheila neither explained nor introduced.

"Perhaps I'd better be going, if you want to talk it over with your solicitor," Joan continued—just to show that, introduction or no introduction, she was no fool and knew at a glance who people were.

"Good-bye," said Sheila, not unkindly, but she held out no hand to her rival. "That's Count Matsumoto's car?"

"It's mine now," came the Parthian answer. "He gave it to *me*."

This, too, was a lie, and a most satisfactory one for Joan. She felt that she had scored—scored off Matsu, scored off that society woman of his. Like a leaf swept along in a whirlwind of her own indignation, she was carried back to Maida Vale in that sumptuous, silent motor-car.

"He won't get away from me," was at the bottom of her thought, "and she won't stand in my way, neither, I'm shore."

Meanwhile the real Countess Matsumoto had summed up her visitor as follows :

" Quite a common little tart ; says she's married to him ; don't believe it ; wouldn't tell me where ; of course, she'd have told me, just to triumph over me, if it had been true ; but she's got quite a hold over him, got his best motor-car, and a chauffeur touching his hat to her ; and she says she's going to have a baby ; that would make her frantic and dangerous ; perhaps it isn't his ; perhaps it is. Perhaps there's no baby at all. And he doesn't care for her ; that's certain. Oh ! What horrible creatures men are ! "

" Let her go—full steam ahead," was Lord Glenbrigg's counsel. " She's the one to follow him out to Japan. Help her along. Let *her* bump into the Japanese. Wait and see. Ha ! Ha ! You can get rid of her, and probably get rid of him, too. We don't want to see our angel child throwing herself away on a yellow devil ! "

" The ship's name is *Fuji Maru*. Where is her first stop ? "

" *Fuji Maru*—a T.S.K. boat—she reaches Marseilles in a week."

" Then I can catch him there, easily. If he is a prisoner, I'll get him out. If he goes on to Japan, then I'll go with him."

CHAPTER XI

SHEILA'S plan was to intercept her truant husband at Marseilles, and to bring him back in triumph to England. But the gods decided otherwise. In Paris she was stricken down by a feverish chill, which sent her temperature up into the hundreds.

Her will tried to fight against it, but her legs collapsed. She fainted in the hall of the Ritz Hotel just as she was about to catch the train for the South. There was no arguing with such a collapse. She had to stay behind in Paris with Gwennie her maid, while her two brothers, Victor and George, went on to Marseilles to cope with this oriental brother-in-law whom neither of them knew even by sight.

Their first impression of the *Fuji Maru* was peculiar and haunting. A great liner, not of the floating palace type, but still a solid well-found ship of some 20,000 tons, staffed, ordered and navigated by little black-haired yellow men, talking the queerest rattle of a language and rather forbiddingly polite. There seemed to be nothing of the same nuance as "Hullo, Bill," "What ho, Joe!" or the friendly swearing of English man-talk. There were notices, too, written in that extraordinary sign-language of the Orient, which, however decorative it may be, was clearly never framed for human understanding. But the ship was admirably clean and tidy—not luxurious certainly, but adequate.

"It's almost like an English ship," said brother Victor. "Fancy these Japs being able to run a ship as well as we can. They're almost human. If they're quite human, they'll have something drinkable on board."

Victor's thirst was his chief characteristic. Its principal nutriment was whisky and soda. Wherever there was a bar, he seemed to gravitate naturally in that direction. So it was on board the *Fuji Maru*. The Mannifold brothers found their way to where a complacent barman dispensed two glasses of Lord Mannifold's favourite medicine; but when His Lordship asked in helpfully broken English:

"Count Matsumoto, I wantee speakee him."

The grinning answer was :

"Very sorry. I think I no can know. Better ask Mister Purser ; he know perhaps."

"Purser" connotes in an ordinary ship a tall handsome individual specially assigned to minister to the requirements of the lady passengers. But here in this Japanese boat he appeared as one of the smallest and most wizened of human creatures, in jaunty white uniform with his cap at a rakish angle.

"Good God," exclaimed Victor, whose imagination had been stimulated by the whisky, "straight off a barrel-organ !"

The purser was very polite, of course, but he had never heard of Count Matsumoto. He produced a list of the passengers, and his third finger as it ran down the column stopped at Matsumoto Eigoro, Matsumoto Mrs., Matsumoto, Miss T., Matsumoto, Miss K.

"Perhaps ?" said the purser. "This is elder gentleman from Mitsui Bussan Kaisha—not Count. Not so ? Then I am so sorry, but no Count at all."

There was something sinister and inscrutable about these smiling people. At the request of Lord Mannifold, Captain Yoshino was produced and introduced. He too smiled and said that he was very sorry. He knew nothing of any Count Matsumoto. He suggested that "my lord" should dine on board the *Fuji Maru* that evening ; he would then see most of the passengers—although some, of course, would be dining on shore ; perhaps "my lord" would be able to recognise his friend. Lord Mannifold then produced a photograph—the famous photograph taken by Basil Perivale at the church gate.

"This is Count Matsumoto," he said. "He has gone away without a word to his friends in England.

The Japanese Embassy in London says that he has gone back to Japan by ship—this ship."

The captain only smiled some more, and shook his head.

"I do not think," he said.

Of course, there was nobody corresponding to Matsu at dinner, that evening. So, either he was not in the ship at all; or else, voluntarily or involuntarily, he was in hiding. If so, the Captain knew and the purser probably also knew; and they were both lying behind their smiles.

"I can't play poker with this bunch," said Victor. "I pass. Probably all rot, anyhow. Whose word have we got that he's here? That tart's! How does she know, anyhow? Thank God, Sheila didn't come. She'd run wild. Do you know, George my lad, I think our sister is potty about this little blighter?"

"I told you so from the beginning."

"I thought it was just the money; that was always our sister's chief concern. Do you remember her money-box in the old days? And her general collection days? By God, and now she collects from Glenbrigg."

And so the conversation floated away into early reminiscence and later scandal, until the brothers decided to give up their hopeless search and to stroll back to their hotel on the Cannebière.

The *Fuji Maru* sailed at dawn.

Next morning, Victor Mannifold was rung up from the British Consulate-General, an urgent summons.

The official in charge, a small smooth man, like a human egg, sizzling with joy at the opportunity of talking with a lord about a matter that smelt of mystery, explained that he had that morning

received a letter addressed to the Honble Sheila Mannifold under cover to himself. The letter had been left early that morning by a man who looked like a French sailor. The envelope bore the stamp of the Tokyo Shosen Kaisha. He knew, of course, (suggesting that the Consulate-General knew most things) that Lord Mannifold had arrived at the Hotel de Noailles. He assumed that the mysterious missive and Lord Mannifold's visit were somehow connected, and he thought it best to hand over the letter personally with a word of explanation. Victor opened it at once. It was from Matsu—written in pencil in clear, round, childish handwriting :

"Dear darling sweetheart,—So sad to part ; but *they* take me away to Japan—not willing to go but like a prisoner here. I forget *them* too much because I love you so much. There is no help in this life. My country would be hell to you because we are not free. They will not let me go again. I am quite prisoner in golden cage. And so my heart breaks because my dream is past. Dream to be Englishman free to stalk the world—dream to have most beautiful Englishwoman near me night and day ; dream to see her heart as she sees my heart ; it is very bitter to see such a dream quickly fade. But it is no use to fight against the fate of my country. I only bring you to perdition because *they* are too strong for us. There is no happy way for us. Good-bye, darling sweetheart."

Lord Mannifold frowned as he read this curious effusion, then he handed it to his brother.

"The fellow must be balmy," was his comment.

"Good riddance for Sheila, anyway," said George. "And they were fooling us on that damned ship ; I knew they were."

It was useless to try conclusions with the *Fuji Maru* or with the Japanese authorities, so the Consulate-General advised; they would merely smile politely and deny all knowledge of the missing Count. So the two Mannifolds returned to Paris, rather crestfallen, and reported to Sheila what they had seen and heard. At the counsel of war which followed the return from Marseilles, she voted for immediate action.

"I leave men; men don't leave me," she declared. "I *chose* Matsu, and I'm going to keep him. I've never been fooled before, and I'm not going to be fooled now. I've been to a fortune teller while you were away, and she says that I am going to have a long journey and a tremendous success. There!"

"Of course that's conclusive," said George. "Only don't you think it is rather cheap to go chasing about the world after a reluctant husband?"

"Of course it is, Porgie. Rotten! But it's rotten to be left on the beach—a virgin bride. 'Count and Countess Matsumoto are on their way to Japan;' that sounds topping—so romantic—we need not add that they have gone by different boats. 'Count Matsumoto left London on the night of his wedding; Countess Matsumoto, *née* Sheila Mannifold, is moping in her tumbled down family mansion, and does not know what has become of her husband.' That's rotten! The newspapers will be bad enough; but the commiseration of my filthy friends—that's what I can't bear. Besides, I must see Matsu. I must have an explanation from him. Perhaps he's right; perhaps it's hopeless. But why? He must show me why? Porgie, I love him. I can't get away from thinking of him, night and day. That's love, I suppose. I've never been like that before, and I never want to be again. But while it's on you, you

can't argue with it! and where it tells me to go, I go. I'm going to Japan by the Siberian route. They tell me that's the quickest. I shall get there before him. Are you two coming with me?"

There was sense in Sheila's argument, especially as regards publicity. A husband to skedaddle on his wedding night—low comedy. A return from Japan, alone—romantic and pathetic and original, quite in keeping with Sheila's legend. Victor would accompany her; he had the advantage of being chronically unemployed, whereas George held His Majesty's commission. Victor had less sense and character than George. Wine and women were both apt to fuddle his rather foolish brain. But he was better than nothing. He could fetch and carry, and attend to tickets and luggage. Not that he was a great traveller. The night journey to Marseilles had seemed to him a damned long way; and now he was in for a ten-day spell of it across Siberia.

"Those blasted Bolsheviks will hold us up, or something," he grumbled. "I don't trust them an inch."

He felt that as a peer and as the owner of a (mortgaged) estate, his own chances of getting safely out of Soviet Russia were particularly poor. But, after all, Sheila was his sister and a Mannifold; he must see her through, he must help her out of her trouble; it was a case of *noblesse oblige*.

The expenses of the expedition were to be paid by Lord Glenbrigg.

CHAPTER XII

"THESE Bolshies aren't as bad as I expected, but I can't make them understand a word."

Such was Victor Mannifold's modified verdict on the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics. He and his sister and his sister's maid, Welsh Gwennie, were sitting in the restaurant car of the trans-Siberian Express, an ordinary restaurant car of pre-war Wagon-Lits stock, but rather battered and ill-kept. He had, through the kind offices of the British Trade Mission at Moscow, and by virtue of a contribution to the "Proletarian Children's Education Fund," secured a berth for Sheila in a real sleeping compartment, but she had to share it with another English lady, Eastward bound. He himself had a "softness" ticket which entitled him to a seat in a ci-devant first-class carriage by day and a "couchette" at night. He shared this luxury with two foreigners (a German man and woman, presumably married) and with Gwennie, a pretty dark girl with shining eyes. Already the equalising influence of Soviet rule was at work, for somehow Victor Mannifold did not resent this contiguity so much as he had expected. Gwennie was quite good looking.

"Who's your stable companion, Sheila?" he asked.

"She hasn't budged; she hasn't uttered. She just lies there in that upper bunk with her back turned. Do you think she's ill, and it's infectious?"

The food, which evolved out of the undecipherable Russian menu, was fairish. There was a strong red wine from the Caucasus which required a further contribution to the "Proletarian Children," but

it was good to find anything so aristocratic as wine in a Communist Republic. It was this discovery that provoked Victor's commendation of the Bolsheviks as not being so bad after all.

During the night the stranger in Sheila's compartment rose and did some washing in the toilet. She then disappeared down the corridor for a considerable period.

"Mystery," thought Sheila. "Perhaps she has got a man somewhere on the train."

Next morning, the unknown one was hidden in her bunk behind closed curtains. She refused to reply to any appeal in English, French or German. However, the ritual on these trains is that during breakfast in the restaurant car the train attendant makes the beds, folding up the upper berth and arranging the lower one so as to form seating accommodation for two passengers. So, Sheila, returning to her compartment, found a fair, thin-faced tow-haired girl sitting up at the window and staring out over the flat Russian landscape. No, she was not a stranger, far from it. With a shock of amazement and dismay Sheila recognised at once the girl who had called upon her in Matsu's car, who had claimed to be her husband's wife, yes, and who had smacked her face—that angel face, world-famous.

"Good God, it's you."

"Yes," said Joan Avery, resignedly. "It's me. Rather awkward, I'm shore, still it can't be helped. I didn't stick myself in here."

"And we're here for ten days," said Sheila, "so what shall I call you?"

"Countess Matsumoto," came the defiant reply.

"But we can't call each other by the same name. It would be worse than Tweedledum and Tweedledee. I'm Sheila Mannifold again—for the time being."

"You can call me Joani—same as he did."

The whole expedition was so dream-like; the whole of life had become so like a dream, that, after their first jolt of recognition, it seemed rather amusing to Sheila that an ironical destiny should have succeeded in imprisoning in such close confinement these two rival countesses both questing for the same count.

She proceeded to take stock of her companion, extending the easy and illusive friendship, that sprouts weed-high in time of travel. Joan was insipid and *ordinaire*, but inoffensive. Her narrow respectability of outlook amused Sheila, who was unused to reticence. In matters of dressing and undressing, Joan was positively prim. "The Countess" was, in fact, a great joke—invaluable during that long railway journey when entertainment was so scarce, and poor Joan was irresistibly flattered by the attention paid to her by "real, smart people"—by Sheila's camaraderie and by Victor's alcoholic love-making.

"You know I like you," she confided to Sheila. "If it were not for baby, I'd have half a mind to turn back. But I must fight for baby's rights, don't you see?"

"Quite right," said Sheila. "I think that's sporting of you. Only men are incredulous sometimes about babies; they want to know how it got there!"

"Oh, Sheila, you do say funny things, you know," Joan was quite overcome with the audacity of her rival's conversational style.

"But, if you're really married to him, then it's *his* baby. That's law!"

"But, you see, I'm not exactly married. It's like this, we're married in the eyes of God and all

that, and he always said he'd marry me and make me a Countess and present me at Court ; only he never actually did it. So things aren't quite so clear as they ought to be."

"No, they're not," said Sheila, relieved of a great anxiety.

"But they're going to be," said Joan. "I don't care about myself, but he's got to recognise my baby. It isn't fair." She began to whimper. Then, suddenly, she asked: "Are you in that way, too ? "

"No," laughed Sheila, rather bitterly. "I've never lived with him at all."

"Do you mean that ? Is that truth ? He's never been with you, like that ? "

"Never like that, Joani. I'm a virgin bride in search of my conjugal rights."

"Whatever that may be. Anyhow, I'm glad he's never been with you, because I like you, do you see ? Apart from all this about *him*, I think you're a good sport ; and his never having been with you like that, well, that makes me sorry for you, I'm shore, and I like you now, and I don't feel such a pore thing as I did ; and it's cleaner, too. I can look at you now without fear. It was driving me mad to think of you and him. Now I don't mind so much. Say, who's the gentleman with you ? "

"That's my brother, Lord Mannifold."

"A real lord ; oh, I say ! "

It was a queer, mad journey—ten days of it—ten days of broken but almost continuous sleep, of waking that seemed like a dream, and of dreams that seemed like waking. Sheila had never imagined that she could sleep after breakfast and again after lunch, and then sleep the whole night through from 9 to 9. Yet, such seemed to be the routine of the trans-Siberian train. It was incredibly monotonous,

and very dirty. No towels, no soap, a thin stream of smutty water dribbling into the cracked basin. Soot everywhere. Windows, walls, floor, engrained with soot.

"Oh! for a bath!" thought (and said) Sheila and Victor Mannifold and Joan Avery and Welsh Gwennie, until after the fourth or fifth day the craving died down, and they began to get used to being dirty and to forget (as man so soon forgets) the necessity of cleanliness. The smuts prevailed upon them, and they surrendered to the dirt.

The food deteriorated. There was plenty of it, too much, in fact—huge fids of pork and beef and veal, which tasted as if they had been boiled in the engine; sour black bread and oily soup—a hateful menu. However, one of the few delicacies was the delicious fresh milk sold in large bottles at the wayside railway-stations. Towards the end of the journey, Sheila was living almost entirely on this milk and on dry biscuits and chocolate.

The journey itself was dull and wearisome—rather hot during the daytime, rather cold at night (at least that became Joan's and Victor's excuse for cuddling up together in the same bunk). The landscape, after passing the Urals which are hills rather than mountains, was flat and desolate—an immense plain covered with forests of pine and birch, with straggling shrubs and withered grass. Clumps of trees lingered disconsolately near the line; and miserable wooden villages were humped round the railway-stations. At the stations, the same grubby, scrofulous children were holding out bunches of wild flowers and baskets of berries for the travellers to buy—flowers and fruit alike grubby and untempting. Ragged beggars were mumbling for alms along the length of the better-class carriages—victims of

the revolution, perhaps, some of those miserable sweepings of humanity, men of education and noble birth reduced to bare existence in this hellish land. Groups of peasants (men, women and children) were bunched inert on benches with their untidy baggage littered around, waiting (it seemed) for trains that would never come, waiting with the impassive melancholy of cattle in a market.

Such is Siberia, a land imperfectly formed, mere raw material of a country, hardly awake, hardly alive, spanned by a single thread of life, the railway which unites Brest and Paris to Vladivostok and Peking. A railway unlike any other! Its principles are equalitarian and communistic; its morals are promiscuous; its sanitation is proletarian; and its migratory population is of all peoples, classes and creeds.

Beyond Irkutsk, the scenery became more stimulating—mountains and lakes! At a station called Manchuria—customs and passport formalities—the crop-haired attendant disappeared and an almond-eyed Chinese boy took his place. This white-jacketed celestial, who answered to the name of John and to any loud and sudden noise, could speak a few words of English and seemed anxious to give satisfaction.

"Missy, aw' wight?" was a constant inquiry on his lips.

Indeed, once across the Chinese frontier there was a distinct change of atmosphere, a sense of refreshment and liberation. Faces smiled more readily; natural courtesy was no longer under restraint.

"Thank God, we're out of that lunatic asylum," said Victor, whose tolerance of the Bolsheviks had declined with the quality of the food. "Thank God, there's no more of that ghastly soup. These Chinks can cook all right, and no mistake."

The anonymous but tasty hashes which marked the progress across the North Manchurian plains were like ambrosia after those Siberian fids of greasy meat. However, after two or three days of Chinese travel, there was a further change at a place called Changchun into a new, Japanese train—very smart and up-to-date, where everything (except the whisky, said Victor) was excellent. The Russian atmosphere had been lugubrious and repressive; the Chinese happy-go-lucky and casual, but friendly and comic; the Japanese was correct, orderly, efficient but somehow ambiguous. These people, who were like us and yet unlike us, one did not quite know how to take them.

Such was Sheila Mannifold's introduction to her husband's country. Grey dawn over a widespread railway-station on a remote Chinese frontier. A squad of soldiers, little square-shouldered brown men in khaki uniform, smart in their movements, determined in their expression, stamp, stamping along an endless platform to the various commands of a very tiny N.C.O. Gendarmes or police of sorts, in white, trailing broad unhandy-looking swords, bowing to each other, bowing again and saluting, bowing to the military officers, bowing (perfunctorily) to the sloppy Chinese officials of the incoming train. A long customs counter in an examination shed. More officials and more officials. A cursory search through passengers' hand-baggage. What were they searching for, since this was no regular customs' frontier? Bombs and "red" literature, apparently. A Korean was arrested, and marched off by the Japanese police. The new train was waiting, smart, sleek and polished with its monster engine of American type and its very tiny engine-driver, a Japanese. Return to cleanliness and comfort, in the

long "observation" car with its club chairs, its bookcase and its attentive waiters. Yet the alertness of these people, their masterfulness, their ceremonious behaviour and their ambiguity were disquieting to Sheila. She would have preferred to deal with a country which she could mess through anyhow like Russia or China. She could have mastered the situation and her fugitive husband in such a land. But now, she was not so sure. She was losing her nerve.

The smuts and the monotony of the journey had demoralised her. The first fine careless rapture had gone. For once in her life, Sheila Mannifold had had leisure to reflect, and across the mists of her vanity, she was dimly aware of something ridiculous. The pursuit of the hungry female after the reluctant male! An unpleasant picture for a lady's eyes. Damn that sickening little Joan! It was she who had introduced the comic touch, and had lowered the whole tone of the expedition. Two hungry females after one reluctant male! Shameful and horrible! Joan's conversation, too—like a ghastly, common echo of Sheila's own thoughts.

"I wonder where he is, now?"

"Won't he be pleased to see us both, I don't think?"

"It's not me I'm thinking of, really, Sheila; it's my baby, you see! That does make a difference, don't it?"

"Shall we cut for him, and see who wins; no, not seriously, but just for fun."

"Who would have thought of us being such friends, Sheila, after all that's happened; and, as for your brother, Lord Mannifold, well, if I wasn't married, so to speak, I don't know what might have happened, I'm shore."

The continual bracketing of herself—Sheila Manni-

fold, "Angel of Audley Street"—with this poor tawdry creature, the inescapable "we," was bad for Sheila's morale. She was in serious danger of losing that magnificent sense of superiority to everything and everybody, which had hitherto carried her flying across all the obstacles of life. That wretched Victor, too, had let her down badly. He called Joan by her Christian name and flirted with her quite shamelessly. His sister had remonstrated with him, but he had replied :

"She's rather a sweet little thing ! That scoundrel Matsu was a damned good judge."

They stopped a night at Mukden, and refreshed by real rest and an actual bath, their morale began to rise. They saw nothing of the famous city of Nurhachi and Chang Tso-lin, but the queer cosmopolitan crowd in the hotel and on the station platforms amused them immensely.

There was a small, round Japanese monk, rather smart-looking in his cream-coloured kimono, with his gold-brocaded cordon. He was watching them intently and fidgeting nervously with his rosary of crystal beads. He inspected with unabashed curiosity the names and initials on the luggage. He even addressed Victor Mannifold in Japanese, bowing stiffly from the stomach. Victor returned the bow, with mock courtesy and a flourish of his dingy grey Homburg.

"I'm sorry, Archibald," he said, "but your lingo baffles me."

This rotund ecclesiastic was still watching them as the Seoul express drew out of the station.

They spent another night at Seoul ; and again, at the moment of departure, they noticed another monk, watching them—more furtively this time and from among a crowd of Japanese.

"It's Matsu's gang," laughed Victor, "they're trailing us!"

"It's nothing to laugh at," said Joan. "They're creepy. I'm sorry I ever came now."

"I'm damned glad," said the gallant Victor; and the bland stare of his wobbly red face expressed the reason for his satisfaction.

"Oh, Victor, you bad man," giggled Joan.

"They make me sick, those two," grumbled Sheila to no one in particular.

After another day's travel among the bleak downs of Korea, they reached Fusan and crossed the Straits at night. A warm and tranquil crossing; bright starlight shining out of a sky of deep blue velvet. At dawn next day, they were lying off the vivid shores of Japan, and the quarantine officers were coming on board.

Joan Avery was entered on the passenger list as "Countess Matsumoto;" the other British travellers consisted of a handful of missionaries, a couple of business men, Lord Mannifold, Miss Sheila Mannifold, and Miss G. Roberts.

CHAPTER XIII

JOHOJI!

The great Temple of the Pure Law!

Even now, with an effort of memory, I can hear the deep reverberations of the matin bell calling me out on to my hotel balcony on one of those Japanese summer mornings when we can see and feel the sunlight growing around us. That lovely bell is like the voice of the sunshine. Twice a day it sounds, at dawn and at sunset. One would think

that like the rising and setting of the sun, it is part of the natural phenomena of daily life—not merely a globe of metal struck by a kind of battering ram manipulated by a couple of robed and shaven monks.

I can see the high, grey, scaly roof of the Johoji Hondo outlined against the pinewoods of Maruyama. It has a more individual air than most of the temples which as an ignorant tourist I inspected during my brief visit to Japan—perhaps because of its connection with Matsu, but also because of its superb position, floating over Kyoto city like a vision of Amida's Paradise descending on a green cloud.

The hills stand about Kyoto like servants in attendance on their lord—Maruyama, Asahiyama, Hiyei San—very famous hills in the history of Japan ; the hills of the ancient Mikados, the hills of poets, the warriors, the artists and the saints. Beyond the hills to the north is the great Lake of Biwa ; to the south, the temples and monasteries of Nara, the factory chimneys of Osaka, the docks and funnels of Kobe and the spangled beauty of the Inland Sea.

Above Kyoto on the eastern hill, hangs the great roof of the Johoji like a circumflex accent. It represents the summit of religious thought in Japan.

Life is an unending cycle of misery, said Buddha, created by the unending process of our own foolish and evil deeds. This is Karma—the chain of cause and effect. The wise mind can have no wish but to escape from so pitiless a destiny. Is there any such escape ? Yes, said Buddha, it is difficult but it is possible to escape. By divine assistance ? No, said Buddha ; look not to any gods for any aid. How then ? By following the Noble Eightfold Path of Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right

Speech, Right Conduct, Right Mode of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Rapture. And whither does it lead, this Path? To Nirvana. And what is Nirvana? The great emancipation, the end of craving, the going-out, the immense void.

Could this ecstatic inanity appeal to so active and positive a people as the Japanese? Could any saint (that is to say, any really holy man who was not a prig or a hypocrite) claim to have followed that noble Eightfold Path in a manner that satisfied his own conscience, and assured him of Nirvana? Impossible, since the real saints are more conscious of their imperfections than are other men. The way of Good Works, the way of the Law, was too hard for man to follow. What hope then had he of escape from the misery of life? No way at all, unless there is a Way of Faith. But if the gods cannot assist us, in whom then can we believe? In Buddha himself, or in the Great Spirit of Loving-kindness which towers up among the dim gigantic shadows that are beyond even Buddha. How can the Spirit of Loving-kindness find the bliss of Nirvana, while these myriads of men and women are born and dying and reborn in misery? The proposition, thus stated, is a contradiction in terms. The salvation of all mankind is, therefore, an integral factor in the bliss of Buddhahood.

Or to put the story in the language of myth—ten myriad ages ago, when the great merciful spirit of Hozo Bosatsu was about to achieve Nirvana, he made the following vow (the eighteenth of a series of forty-eight):

"When I have reached the accomplishment of Buddhahood, I shall not take complete enlightenment upon me, until the living creatures of All Ten Quarters, who with comforted hearts believe on

me and have the wish to be born into my Land, and so, even for a tenth fraction of a time, direct their piety towards me, shall all be born with me into the same state."

Hozo the Initiate became known as the Buddha Amida, the Great Spirit of Loving-kindness, who, from time to time, in pursuance of his vow, is incarnated here on earth, and who was revealed in the mortal form of Shaka Muni, the Buddha *par excellence*, whom history knows as Prince Gautama of Kapilavastu.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The ascetic Buddhism of the early days had, in fact, evolved a faith quite contrary to its original doctrine, and so close to the Christian scheme of grace and redemption that at times we are puzzled to discriminate between the devotional language of East and West.

"I am old and I am a woman, and it is not expected that a woman will know much of such subjects, but I will tell you what thoughts I have. I am weak and sinful, and have no hope in myself; my hope is all in Amida Buddha. I believe him to be the Supreme Being. Because of the wickedness of man and because of human sorrow, Amida Buddha became incarnate and came to earth to deliver man; and my hope and the world's hope is to be found only in his suffering love. He has entered humanity to save it; and he alone can save. He constantly watches over and helps all who trust in him. I am not in a hurry to die, but I am ready when my time comes; and I trust that through the gracious love of Amida Buddha I shall then enter into the future life which I believe to be a state of conscious

existence, and where I shall be free from sorrow. I believe that he hears prayer, and that he has guided me thus far, and my hope is only in his suffering love."

This is an authentic confession of the faith which Japan has preached to the world, the faith in salvation through the grace of a Divine Redeemer. The seeds of this faith may have come from China or beyond, but the full growth of the mighty tree has been nourished in the soil of Japan and out of the richness and originality of the Japanese character.

Namu Amida Butsu!

I worship thee, Thou Buddha of boundless Life and Light!

CHAPTER XIV

THE Big Five, the *shugyo*, of the Johoji Temple were assembled in the Abbot's Parlour; and if you skipped the last chapter, because it seemed to be a kind of prosy interlude, you will not fully understand the significance of the Big Five and their responsibilities.

The paper windows were opened to the cool autumn breezes, which sighed through the pine-branches of Maruyama. The city of Kyoto was hidden by the trees and by the slope of the hill. It was revealed only in a vapour of grey smoke, rising as from a hidden cauldron. Opposite, the dark outline of another pine-clad hill stood out, detached from the blue sky so clearly that it seemed to be cut out of cardboard. The pagoda tower of a rival temple was stuck like a cockade into the brim of the hill. Beyond, one could distinguish the severe and frowning shape of Hiyei San, the mountain of the Warrior Monks.

The Abbot of the Johoji, Matsumoto Choson, was not in the Abbot's parlour among the Big Five; His Holiness had not yet returned from his educational visit to England. The Vice-Abbot, Matsumoto Choren, presided at the meeting. He was a round-faced, secular little man with black moustache and grizzled hair. He was dressed in the black cloak (*haori*) and dark brown skirt (*hakama*) of an ordinary Japanese gentleman's attire. He squatted cross-legged facing the open window. To right and left of him, squatted four monks—real monks these, with closely shaven heads and creamy-white robes and the *kesa* or scarf of brown and gold brocade (the distinguishing mark of the Buddhist priesthood throughout Japan) slung like the ribbon of an order from shoulder to hip. In front of each of the five was placed a small lacquer table with tea and cakes and cigarettes, but the cakes were left untasted, and only the Vice-Abbot was smoking.

"The return of the Lord Abbot (*Go Hoshu Sama*) is likely to be embarrassing," said the Reverend Kawada, Principal Treasurer of the Sect, a short man with the rotundity of a barrel.

"You have heard the urgent reasons which made it necessary," said the Master of the Ceremonial, an elderly gentleman with double chin, a member of the Matsumoto family.

"There are many supporters of our Sect who think it is better that the Lord Abbot should live abroad," said the Superintendent of Works, tall and broad-shouldered. "In this way scandals are avoided, and there have been too many scandals in the Johoji of recent years. It was for this reason that we agreed that the Lord Abbot should go abroad for study, and perhaps we ought to have been consulted before His Holiness was recalled to Japan."

The Superintendent's name was Naito; he was no relative of the Matsumotos, and no friend of theirs, either.

"The Lord Abbot has become so English that he has married an English woman by English law," said the Master of the Ceremonial. "The Reverend Soda who is in charge of our affairs in England, decided that he must take rather strong measures. He caused the Lord Abbot to be placed unwillingly in a ship and returned to Japan."

"He is married, then, already?" said Superintendent Naito, who thought that the Johoji would be well rid of the Matsumoto family. In these progressive days, an elected President should succeed the hereditary monarch. He, Naito, would be the obvious choice as President.

"He is married by English law," said the Ceremonial, "but not by Japanese Law."

"But by his English marriage he is prevented from marrying in Japan?"

"I think it would be difficult unless the English wife is first divorced."

"Then, there can be no more talk of a marriage with the Imperial Family?"

"I regret that there is now this obstacle, and I have already informed a certain person," said the Ceremonial, not without bitterness; he had lost a point to his opponents. It would not have been by any means the first time that the great priestly clan of Matsumoto had found a bride in the Imperial Family, and such an exalted marriage would have been singularly opportune at the present moment when the prestige of the family was on the wane, and when the tides of envy, democracy and scepticism were rising around the famous temple on Maruyama.

"What kind of a woman is this English wife?" asked the Treasurer.

"Soda San writes that she is of a noble family among English people. But what use is that to us? She is quite unsuitable."

"Still, there is no indecorum, if she is of a noble family. We should write this at once in the newspapers, before they begin to invent things."

"Kawada San is right," said the Ceremonial; "I had not thought of that point."

The Vice-Abbot fanned himself and lit another cigarette. The politics of his monastery bored him intensely, he left the interests of his family to the care of the Master of the Ceremonial and financial affairs to the Treasurer. So long as he drew his fat stipend as a highly-placed member of the Matsumoto family, he was quite content with things as he found them. He lived a life of mild worldliness in Kyoto city, where he had a private villa of his own—a little mild gambling, some insipid literary interests, sketchy flirtations in the geisha world, periodic attendance at court, the little affairs of his own family of ten children—such were the concerns of the Vice-Abbot, a kindly but rather silly little man.

"It is all very difficult," he said, "but for myself I shall be glad to see Choson Sama again, a very dear, good-hearted fellow. But you, Okabé San, you have said nothing to us to-day?"

The Reverend Okabé, Chief Missioner of the Order and Director of Propaganda, squatted in a corner by the window, and the light striking sideways upon him, left the hither side of his face in shadow. It was a pale, austere face which lightened quickly with a delightful smile—a Franciscan face. Okabé San had been placed on the governing body

by popular demand at the time of the scandals and suicide of the late Abbot, Matsu's uncle. These events had called unwelcome attention to the fact that at that time no one except members of the Matsumoto family had any say whatever in the expenditure of the vast revenues of the sect. So, the *shugyo* or Big Five were then created as a supreme Governing Council. Naito, an enemy, was placed on this board, and Kawada, a trimmer. Okabé, the outstanding figure in the neo-Buddhist movement, had been a fortunate, nay an inspired addition. Okabé was a saint and a miracle-worker. The son of a rich merchant family, he had been educated for business in Japan and abroad. But he had seen the glint of a light which is not of this world—the light of Amida's Paradise for suffering souls—and he had buried himself as a Buddhist priest in the depths of the Osaka slums. That was his world, the ministration of comfort to the poorest of the poor. The splendours of the Johoji and the intrigues of the Matsumotos and their opponents were unreality to him. He had accepted office on the Governing Council, because his friends had persuaded him that he could do good in that capacity. The whole nation trusted his sincerity, and his Order called upon him to set the seal of his credit to their own somewhat suspect bond. He became one of the Big Five, but he had no grasp of the high politics of religion, and at the conclaves of the Order, he willingly confined himself to a smiling silence.

This time, however, the Vice-Abbot challenged him :

" What is Okabé San's opinion on this matter ? I should like to know."

" I am sorry for Choson Sama ! As His Reverence says, he has a good heart and no bad intention.

If he were not a 'Living Buddha' he would be quite a good ordinary man."

"He is too fond of women, it is shameful," snapped the vitriolic Naito.

"Being a young man, it is not unnatural," said Okabé. "I am sorry, too, for his woman. *Kawaiso des'* (it is pitiful!)"

This was an original point of view; Okabé was indeed like a Buddha, but so unpractical. The woman was not only a nuisance, but a foreigner; she deserved no consideration at all.

"That person is hardly worth our sorrow," said the Ceremonial, pontifically.

"Yet for her, too, Amida Butsu made the Original Vow."

"I doubt it; she is a *ketojin* (*i.e.* a hairy one, a savage foreigner)," growled the Ceremonial.

"Then is salvation for the Japanese alone?" asked Okabé.

"It is probably so."

"Yet in the Original Vow it says 'the living creatures of All Ten Quarters' and Shaka Muni himself was an Indojin."

"It is different since Genson Sama was born; Genson Sama was a Japanese; he made a difference between Japanese and all other people."

"And yet, Your Reverence, was it not Genson who said that All Mankind has one heart? We must be kind and pitiful to our Lord Abbot and also to his woman, if we wish truly to say '*Namu Amida Butsu.*' That is all the advice I can give."

Silence fell, when Okabé San had spoken. These worldly priests were not quite beyond the reach of the Ideals of their Order; for them, too, even for them, had Amida made his Vow of salvation.

From outside came the continuous harsh clatter

of *geta* (Japanese wooden sandals) along a stone-flagged walk—a sound like the scraping of the tide against a pebble beach. Twilight was beginning to close. The distant citadel of Hiyei San was cloaked in cloud. The cool autumn breeze began to make its presence felt in the Abbot's parlour.

"Shall I close?" inquired Naito. The Vice-Abbot assented.

Okabé San prostrated himself.

"His Reverence will excuse me?" he asked. "There is business in the temple. *O itoma wo itashimasho* (Humbly I take my leave)."

The Vice-Abbot bowed. Okabé rose from his knees, and glided away along the walls of the room.

"That person is preaching to-night at the vesper service," grumbled the Superintendent of the Ceremonial. "Half Kyoto will be there to hear him. Yet what he preaches is simple and rather silly. You heard him to-day. Salvation for foreigners! What a foolish idea! They cannot even understand our books, and they have their own way of *Christokyo*. It is absurd; truly that Okabé San is a very simple fellow; and yet he is famous in Japan, and people listen to him when they will not listen to me—me, Matsumoto Chakuson, of direct descent from Genson Sama himself; it is indeed strange."

The other three listened inattentively to the old man's grumblings, until a scratching at the paper window interrupted him.

"*O hairi* (come in!)"

A small shaven-headed lad, a servant of the monastery, overcome at being in the presence of the very greatest, bowed low at the crack of the sliding window. He entered, looking rather like a scared rabbit, and with another low bow handed a bright

pink telegram to the Vice-Abbot, then bowed again and scuttered away with evident relief.

The Vice-Abbot frowned.

"This is from the Johoji at Mukden," he said. "Indeed it is most embarrassing. It is reported that an English woman called Countess Matsumoto passed through Mukden on the express from Siberia on the —th. She will arrive at Shimonoseki on the —th. She claims to be the wife of our Go Hoshu Sama. What is there to do?"

"Yet another week before Go Hoshu Sama himself returns!" said Naito. "How is it known that this is the true wife? Our young men in England have many wives!"

"This must be kept secret!" said the Ceremonial. "Whatever happens, this must not be written about in the newspapers. Until Go Hoshu Sama returns, we must guard this woman. Perhaps Vice-Abbot's Honourable Interior will take care of her?"

Again the Vice-Abbot frowned.

"My wife is not accustomed to foreign people. They are very difficult," he said. "And our house is not so large."

"We can keep her in the *besso* at Kamidani," suggested Kawada, the corpulent Treasurer. "It is difficult to escape from there."

"She will be a guest," said the Vice-Abbot." She will not be a prisoner."

"Such a thing is not said," observed the Treasurer.

The conference continued its listless discussion for half an hour or so. It was decided to send two trusty brethren to Shimonoseki, in lay clothing, to intercept Countess Matsumoto, to observe her, and at the right moment to introduce themselves to her and bid her welcome in the name of the Johoji. A delicate task, but, it would seem, a fairly simple

one—the Intelligence Officer at Mukden not having revealed the all-important fact that there were *two* Countess Matsumotos, travelling on the same train!

The Vice-Abbot was bored and anxious to escape to a Verse-Competition Club which was being held that evening in a friend's house. After the more serious poetasting the company would adjourn for food and drink and dalliance at a neighbouring *machiai* (house of assignation). There would be geisha of the refined literary type that were Kyoto's special pride; perhaps the famous Wakaharu (Young Spring) would herself be there. There would be more poetic composition, but in a lighter vein with those delicious *double entendres*, which, especially in the fascinating company of geisha, send such heavenly trickles of pleasure down the spine of the Japanese *dillettante*. It would certainly be great fun.

The Ceremonial retired to his private apartments in the eastern wing of the Monastery. A steaming hot bath, an hour of rest and massage, a well-cooked meal with eels on the menu, an ample potation of warm *saké*, and then to bed beneath the green mosquito-net, on the comfortable silken mat that befitted a high priest of the Matsumoto family.

Superintendent Naito, who was a scholar, withdrew to his modest cell in the communal apartments, in order to study a new critical edition of the Pundarika Sutra, which he had received from Berlin. He was not ill-satisfied to see the Matsumoto family in trouble again. The sooner they discredited themselves entirely, the better. To quote an elegant Japanese proverb, "Let them eat their own dung."

The stout Treasurer, alone in the Abbot's parlour, summoned two monks of tried fidelity and discre-

tion, Takagi and Ito. Having revealed to them, under strictest pledge of secrecy, the amazing story of the Abbot's English marriage, he despatched them to Shimonoseki by the midnight train with instructions to identify Countess Matsumoto and—put plainly—to abduct her.

Okabé Tokuji, the fifth of the Big Five, had not returned to the Council Chamber. Vespers were ended, and night had fallen. A single oil-lamp burned on the altar in front of the great golden image of the Merciful Buddha. The huge wooden pillars of the nave were dimly seen, or felt, in the darkness behind him, like the tree trunks of a pine-forest. Alone, in his stall, squatted the Reverend Okabé. He held his rosary in his lap, but he had ceased to tell the beads. He was sunk in meditation; he was engrossed in prayer—prayer for the great organisation, which had been his world and his life, prayer for the hapless young man who had been born to be the ruler of that world, prayer for the foreign woman whom he had drawn into the vortex of his destiny, prayer for his colleagues, so remote in heart from the high matters which they had to decide, and for all the monks, and for all Japanese people, and for all the world.

"The world is an inn full of guests. Most of them neither know whither they are going, nor take any thought thereon, and many even congratulate themselves on not bothering about it; and some are always quarrelling; and some are always giggling. What a crowd! One does not know whether to smile or to weep over them! Yet there are some of us, who in ourselves are neither Lamps of Wisdom nor Mirrors of Virtue, just country-fellows, rough and uncouth, lodged in an obscure corner of the great inn; and it is we, who have received through

Buddha's name the summons of the Most High, and we know that we are on the way to Him, our faces turned towards the City of Light. Life is a highway, which leads us on to joy, and joyfully smiles the sun on us to-day. With such thoughts in our hearts we can gladly set to work to fulfil our daily duties. Such is the life of Buddha's children!"

Namu Amida Butsu!

CHAPTER XV

THE gateway of Japan—the straits of Shimonoseki! Here the warships of England, France, and America first blasted their way into the inner sanctuary of the Japan seas; hence the revolution started which restored the Emperor to supreme authority; here the Treaty was signed that concluded the war with China and established Japan's claim to significance among the nations of the world; and here or hereby is the Tsushima Channel where the Russian Armada was scattered and sunk by the squadrons of Admiral Togo.

To the right of the Strait, the smoking factories of Moji nestle under the Kyushu hills; to the left is Shimonoseki itself, a long straggling town that circulates round a small acropolis crowned by a temple grove. Such is Japan—new and old—as she presents herself to the traveller arriving from Asia by the usual sea-route.

After the tiresome quarantine observances and the fidgety passport inspection, the foreigners—among them Sheila Mannifold, her brother, Joan Avery and Welsh Gwennie—were allowed to land on Shimonoseki pier, opposite the new-style hotel and the terminal railway-station. They had sur-

vived such an eternity of railway travelling that they never wanted to look at a train again. It was very hot, too, very hot and dusty. With joy, therefore, they discovered (from the missionaries who were their fellow-travellers) that there was an alternative to the twelve-hour journey to Kyoto, a very pleasant alternative, a trip by steamer, through the myriad islets of the Inland Sea—a very calm sea, guaranteed calm in this placid autumn weather. They could dine ashore at Shimonoseki, go on board their new boat after dinner; and they would sail at dawn.

Joan Avery registered herself everywhere as Countess Matsumoto. It had become a kind of *idée fixe* in her not oversteady brain, "I am Countess Matsumoto," thus she used to explain her status. "My husband is a Japanese aristocrat. Yes, I am going to join my husband in Japan—isn't it fine?"

To please the girl and to tease his sister, Victor Mannifold used to play up to her absurd vanity and to call her "Countess" and "Your Ladyship." She was the type of creature that appealed to him; good-looking and good-natured, she put no sort of strain on his manners or on his intellect.

"I'll marry Joani," he confided to Sheila. "She wants a title, she can have mine; I'll catch her on the upsplash when she's bored with Japan. She's just my sort; I can get quietly buffy in her company, and she won't think she's too good for me."

"Victor, you can't; it's disgusting; she's been the mistress of a Japanese, and she's going to have a baby."

Her brother looked at her with that irritating grin on his loose, red face.

"And you, my dear?"

Sheila turned away from him and started to walk

down the deck. A glorious risen sun was shining on the blue waters of the Inland Sea. The steamer was gliding through a cluster of diminutive islets, grey-cliffed and pine-crested, with every detail of their landscape in miniature. The cliffs that frowned so resolutely were only a few feet high; the valleys and hills behind them were only a few yards across; the pine-trees were dwarfed and twisted like those delightful little Japanese baby trees, with which Sheila had often decorated her dinner table in Mayfair. Some of the islands were uninhabited; some had little brown houses growing on them—like doll's houses; one had the sweetest little grey stone lighthouse like a pepperpot. Little brown shiny boats with tall white sails moved in and out among the islands "like phantom ships upon a painted ocean."

It was all very beautiful—a "real honeymoon land" as one of the missionary ladies had observed to the "Countess"; but Sheila Mannifold was disconcerted by her first impressions of Japan. The long, unreal railway journey had sapped her resolution; the presence of Joan Avery had introduced an element of farce (French farce!) which distracted and distressed her. She had started off on her journey with her usual clear intuition as to what she wanted and how she meant to get it. But in this ambiguous Orient her personality seemed to be losing grip. She was beginning to see herself—oh, the horror of it!—in an unfavourable light. Was that ass Victor right, and was she just making a fool of herself, like Joan? Chasing a reluctant man half-way round the world, and that man a Japanese? She had never seen Japanese people *en masse* before. The more she saw of them, the less she liked them. Matsu had seemed quite different; like an Englishman in his ways, clean and straight

and a sportsman, but with a delightful exotic rarity and grace. Even now, her senses thrilled at the thought of him, and her heart sickened with the fear that she might have to let him go.

Her imagination had never reached out to embrace her husband's country. Temples and pagodas, lacquered and shining; butterfly girls in gorgeous kimonos; so quaint, so picturesque, so charming, so new. On her first landing in the dust and heat of Shimonoseki, all these dreams had vanished. A squalid country of ugly men, bedraggled women, and dirty children; that is what she saw, and the thought of it was growing upon her with an increasing distaste. Would she find the loveliness of Japan in Kobe or Kyoto? She doubted it. Would she find the refinement, amusement and luxury of a European capital? She was certain that she would not. The quality of this country was rough, primitive, barbarous. She could not stand such conditions for long. She must take Matsu back to London. But would she ever find her Matsu again in this strange goblin land?

She gazed across the calm waters to the mainland of Japan, to the blue mountain-ridge which closed the horizon. Matsu was beyond those mountains, in some native fastness, inaccessible to a mere foreigner, inaccessible even to Love.

"Over the mountains
And over the waves,
Under the fountains
And under the graves;
Under floods that are deepest,
Which Neptune obey,
Over rocks that are steepest,
Love will find out the way."

Sheila pondered over the fatuity of the old song. She belonged to a generation and to a set that had little faith in Love. The fierce exclusive desire which had burned in her veins ever since her first visits to Matsu in hospital; the pride which resented abandonment; such feelings were only natural. But love? It seemed silly and soppy and romantic and Victorian to be in love. She was *not* in love; she would never be. She would pass from one desire to another, fancy-free—less cautious, henceforward, more frankly carnal. This guarding of herself for some unknown prince had been rather absurd. Nor would her beauty last for ever—even in these days of standardised beauty. She was preparing her mind instinctively for loss of Matsu.

In the stern of the ship, she saw "Countess Matsumoto," aflop in a deck chair. Two Japanese, sitting up beside her, hovered over her in their black silk *haori* like two crows; they appeared to be men of a superior class. Joan's society smile was flickering to and fro, with an evident desire to charm.

"That woman is used to Japs," thought Sheila. "She knows how to talk to them."

Joan's presence had cramped her style terribly, and had lowered her in her own estimation. Matsu's mistress was like a distorting mirror that held his true wife up to ridicule; for all the nasty things which quite naturally one thought about Joan and her relations with Japanese in general and with Matsu in particular applied (with a difference) to Sheila, too. And Victor Mannifold was always ready to apply them. He had no mercy on his sister—families are like that—and no sense of decency.

"Old friends of yours, Joan?" asked Sheila, not without malice, when the two crows had departed, and Victor had taken their place.

"No, but they know the Count," Joan retorted; "they say he's back in Japan already."

A sudden flutter of her emotions told Sheila that—love or no love—her longing for Matsu was still very much alive. She wanted to see him beyond all mortal things. And then? She did not know! To Joan she professed indifference, for she could not face the hateful thought of that humiliating competition. So she made no comment, but lit a cigarette with one of those patent lighters—platinum with an initial in diamonds, a present from Black Jack. Joan smiled.

"Give us a smoke, Sheila dear, just to show it's all friendly. What a pretty lighter? I wish some one would give me one." She had thought that this must have come from Matsu.

"I'll give it you myself," flashed Sheila, "on your wedding-day."

But Joan just smiled; she seemed very pleased about something.

The reason became apparent next day, on landing at Kobe. Joan Avery left the ship, escorted by the two crows, with a very curt "*Au revoir*" to her travelling companions. She was seen leaving the customs' house with her Japanese acquaintances; she was observed stepping into a large, if somewhat dowdy, limousine, the roof of which was garnished with her luggage. Tooting vigorously, the big car started away up the Bund at a determined pace. Privilege and favouritism were at work. The Mannifolds had not yet cleared their baggage through the customs.

"She's gone off with those Japs," was Sheila's comment. "You see, Vic, she's not very faithful to you."

"There's more in this than meets the eye,"

Lord Mannifold observed, judicially. "She thinks Matsu is in Japan, and she's gone off to find him. She thinks she's scored one up on us. Poor little devil!"

"Her?"

"No, *him*. Heaven knows no fury like a woman scorned. Eh, Sheila?"

"But perhaps he *is* here."

"Not likely, unless he flew."

CHAPTER XVI

At the very moment when the Mannifolds were threading their way through a clamorous eastern mob to their hotel on the Kobe bund, the S.S. *Fuji Maru* was emerging from the narrow Whangpoo river, past the Woosung forts, into the broad and muddy Yangtze. She was starting upon the last stage of her long journey to Japan.

To Count Matsumoto Choson it was the last stage of a long dream—a dream of liberty, friendship and rapture. All was over now. With oriental resignation he submitted to his fate. All life is illusion. The Karma-chain of action and reaction holds us fast. He could not break away from it. Was he not a Buddhist? Was he not a Buddha, almost?

To be seized and drugged and bound and kidnapped and kept for weeks as a captive in a ship's cabin—an English boy would have revolted against such unjust and lawless treatment, would have revolted and would probably have escaped. The idea of escape hardly even occurred to Matsu, though his gaolers took the precaution of locking him in and doubling the watch whenever the ship

was in port. Not rebellion, but contrition was uppermost in Matsu's mind—also a kind of sentimental hopelessness, a rosemary-perfumed wilderness into which the Japanese soul is apt to stray—not unwillingly. *Shikata ga nai !* There is no way of doing ! With this familiar opiate, he stifled his longing for Sheila's caresses, and even his love for her, which was quite a genuine and strenuous passion. But then he was no longer Count Matsumoto of Oxford and Mayfair ; he was Matsumoto Choson, Lord Abbot of the Johoji. He had little more life in him than the great gilded image of Amida which presides over the high altar on Maruyama.

Mr. Soda had made this quite clear to him. Mr. Soda had been his tutor during his boyhood in Japan. Mr. Soda, unbeknown to him, had followed him to England in order to keep a watchful eye on his doings in the interests of the Johoji. It was to Mr. Soda that Hanjiro (under instructions from the Johoji) had made periodical reports on his master's activities and acquaintances. It was to Mr. Soda that the valet had telegraphed on that fateful wedding day ; and it was Mr. Soda who had organised the kidnapping of Matsu—a very neat piece of work for a Buddhist monk of profound learning and piety.

He was a small wizened bird-like man, with a blotchy face and very thin hands, like claws. He peered with filmy eyes through gold-rimmed spectacles. But although he seemed to be blind, very little missed his notice. He had always had an almost hypnotic influence over Matsu, and his appearance on the scene at that crucial moment in the Thames Valley cottage had convinced his pupil of his omniscience. He had neither scolded Matsu, nor lectured him. He had treated him with calm deference due to his high rank, and with a certain

light humour as a very old family friend. He played bridge with him, partnered by the ship's officers, by Hanjiro and by his own acolyte, Mr. Tomii, a young Joboji priest, unmarried, and of approved discretion. With talk and reading and mild gambling, he wiled away the tedium of the long sea-voyage.

"It is nothing," such was the burden of his counsel, "these young man's indiscretions! A necessary part of education, perhaps—*Tamashii no sentaku*—the 'soul's laundry.' Perhaps it was our fault for leaving you in England so long. The proper place for the Lord Abbot of the Johoji is in his own monastery on the Kyoto hills—or at the Emperor's Court—or in the House of Peers—a great man in Japan—*erai hito* ('famous person')—guiding the faith of twenty million believers. A noble life—and a pleasant one, too. We must find a wife for the Lord Abbot—perhaps the Imperial Princess for whom negotiations have already begun. Only, there must be no scandal round an imperial personage. Afterwards, later on, there may be geisha—but discreetly."

"But already there is a marriage by the English law."

Mr. Soda chuckled.

"That will arrange itself very easily," he said. "It was a mistake, that is all. No English woman wants a husband who is never in England. There will be a divorce arranged, and no one in Japan will think such an English marriage to be a serious thing—just a picking of a flower—that is all."

So strong was Mr. Soda's influence, that at the moment Matsu was himself inclined to think that that was all. He observed, however:

"English divorce law is not the same as in Japan. It is much more difficult, I think. But I shall write

to Sheila and ask her what she wants me to do."

There was a sob in the boy's voice, which Mr. Soda affected to ignore.

"There must be no writing to that person," he said. "We have cut the cord of affection, and writing would only tie it together again—for no use! The Johoji forgives you; it is Buddha's law always to forgive, but in return for forgiveness, it expects —obedience."

There was no escaping from the Johoji, which had played with its Lord Abbot as a cat plays with a mouse, letting him escape for the moment into English liberty only to catch him in its paw again the moment that he seemed to be really free. Perhaps it was better so. Perhaps he, Matsumoto Choson, did not possess that quality of spiritual independence which graced his friends in England, both the men and the women. Japanese belong to a group—family, clan, or trade; within this group is safety and friendship, outside is exile and danger. The group is everything; the individual is nothing. Within the group, Matsu was Lord Abbot of the Johoji, spiritual Lord of twenty million Buddhists, and hereditary representative of a very great tradition. Outside, he was Matsumoto Choson, a queer little Jap, with no particular gift or quality. To the Johoji he owed even his English bride; for, had he not been Count Matsumoto, and as rich as Crœsus, he would never have come within her orbit. But for the Johoji, it was doubtful whether he would even have risen as high as Joan Avery. The Johoji, therefore, was infinitely the most important factor in his existence, and to the Johoji he must submit.

His feelings, however, on seeing once again the blue hills of his native country were mixed and

obscure. Being a Japanese, and therefore a patriot and a sentimentalist, he could not see those curtains of grey mist curling round the Kyushu mountains without a catch in the breath and perhaps a tear. He could not see the Rising Sun flag on the guardian cruiser of the Shimonoseki straits without a sympathetic "Ah!" of pleasure. He was home, home among his own people, home among friends! But he had no people, and no friends. Death had robbed him of parents, and his high station had eliminated friendship. In England, he had known what friendship can be, friendship without flattery—Whitelock, Turner, Tomlinson; yes and Sheila herself and poor little Joani San. He had treated Joan badly. *Kawaiso! Kawaiso!* (pitiful!) But Joan could be comforted with money, and Sheila had her own proud spirit. Still, at this moment of return to his native land, he would gladly have had any one of his English friends, male or female, beside him. Whitelock, especially; he missed the harsh, authoritative counsel of his proletarian don.

He landed at Shimonoseki in the quarantine launch; it was just five days after Sheila's arrival. Mr. Soda was anxious above all things to avoid publicity. You cannot travel about with a "living Buddha," whose touch procures indulgence from a thousand years of purgatory, without provoking curiosity and interest. Moreover, the Japanese newspapers, even at Singapore and Shanghai, had got hold of the story of the marriage to a famous English beauty. "Matsu" therefore was "news value" of great importance, and since the Press was rationalist and anti-Buddhist and entirely shameless and irresponsible in its personal remarks, the cautious Soda thought better to smuggle his Lord Abbot ashore and hurry him in a motor-car to

the first station down the line, where he could inconspicuously slip into his sleeping compartment. Similarly, the next morning he did not travel by train as far as Kyoto, but descended at Osaka, and motored thence to the ancient capital, to the snug and secluded residence of his cousin, the Vice-Abbot.

Until that awful moment of his return, poor Matsu had forgotten the burden of his divinity; but after receiving and acknowledging the formidable salutations of the Vice-Abbot and his numerous family at the entrance to the dwelling, he was invested in the purple *kesa* or priestly scarf embroidered with the family crest of the pine tree and was ushered into the principal reception room, where all the senior priests of the Johoji were assembled in many-coloured robes—blacks, whites, browns, greens, and a few purples (these last being members of the Matsumoto family). This considerable assemblage, uniformly shaven and asquat, prostrated itself with forehead to ground, as the partition slid open, and the spiritual head of the sect appeared. Fresh from London drawing-rooms and twentieth-century cocktail parties, the whole performance seemed to Matsu to be incongruous and absurd. However, he made a short speech of greeting to the whole company and he had a few words of recognition for some of the priests, whom he was supposed to remember. He acquitted himself with dignity, and the general impression was a favourable one. Go Hoshu Sama had grown into a great man; he was certainly very handsome; and his travels had added to his presence; but it is said that he is married to a foreign woman; this is written in the newspapers; it will be difficult indeed; for if there are children then the next Lord Abbot will be half a *seiyojin*; that is impossible; then the Matsumoto family will be

set aside and we shall have an elected abbot; that will be more suitable to the spirit of the times; no, that is Bolshevik talk; who, then, would be elected as Abbot? Okabé San, for certain; no, Naito San has more knowledge of affairs.

Thus, the gossip ebbed and flowed, as the priests shuffled homewards up the steep road to the Johoji. One fat monk, even more gossipy than his fellows, said:

"Have you heard the story of Kamidani?"

"No, what is that, Kuroda San?"

"There is a white woman there, in the abbot's *besso?*"

"*Naruhodo!* How do you know that?"

"Takagi and Ito went away a week ago. Where have they gone?"

"That is not known!"

"A certain person in Daimaru's silk-store saw Takagi and Ito land at Kobe from the Shimonoseki boat. A foreign woman was with them. They all went away together in a motor-car!"

"Where did they go?"

"To the abbot's *besso* in Kamidani."

"How is that known?"

"It is a strange thing to see two Johoji priests driving in motor-car with a foreign woman; so that certain person thinks. He is my relative, and therefore wished to know this thing. He saw that the motor-car was a hired car from Kyoto, not from Kobe. It was one of Tanaka's cars—Tanaka in Shitayoshicho. So he went next day to ask this Tanaka about hiring a car and so found out everything from the driver who had driven Takagi and Ito and the foreign woman. He had taken them to the abbot's *besso* at Kamidani beyond Nara near Yoshino. There are famous cherry trees there. The

besso had been made tidy and there was an old woman there, and the old woman's husband, a Johoji priest; and they all laughed and were happy together, yes, and the foreign woman, too; she could speak a little Japanese. A very beautiful foreign person. Undoubtedly, she is the English wife of Go Hoshu Sama."

"*Ma! Naruhodo!*"

So, in spite of the precautions of Mr. Treasurer Kawada, the story of the white woman at Kamidani was soon running current among the Johoji monks.

How did it reach the Lord Abbot himself? That is a mystery, for the person principally concerned in gossip is generally the last to hear it. Treasurer Kawada had taken this platitude for granted, just as he had taken for granted the axiom that Lord Abbots, being congenitally stupid, never know anything, and never do anything. Also, being an Oriental, he thought that time did not matter. Nor was he yet fixed in his own line of policy. Was he going to fight the Matsumotos' battles for them? Or would he let them perish in their own folly? Then he would swing over to the Republican party and those who wished to have an elective Abbot. The foreign woman in Kamidani was, so he believed, an important factor in his political game, only he was not sure as yet, how to use her. His plottings and plans were, however, brought to naught by two miscalculations; first, he had got hold of the mistress, not the wife; secondly, the gossip of the monastery found its way to the Lord Abbot.

Perhaps it was the talk of the servants in his cousin's Kyoto mansion; perhaps it was the women, his relatives—women and their damned chatter! Was the great Genson Shonin really wise in his decision to allow his priests to marry?—or perhaps

it was one of the monks who had carried the tale. The young Abbot was taking his position quite seriously. He attended at the monastery for two or three hours every day. He was studying its history and its organisation; and, especially, he wished to make the acquaintance of all the resident monks, and, as far as possible, of all visiting priests who came in from outlying districts. In these dangerous activities, he was aided and abetted by Okabé San, the miracle worker of the Osaka slums, who was very favourably impressed with the young man.

"This is one of the great abbots of old time!" he had declared. "A descendant worthy of Genson Shonin. He will do great things——"

"He smells of foreign lands," said the Ceremonial. "It was a mistake ever to have sent him abroad."

"This is new to him," said the Superintendent of Works, "also he has turned from love-affairs to serious matters, but when the next pretty face comes along——"

"It is to be wondered what the end will be," said the Treasurer, mysteriously.

Anyhow, the Lord Abbot came to know, surreptitiously, that there was something or somebody of great importance to him, hidden away in the old pleasure villa beyond Nara. This *besso* had been built by one of his saintly predecessors for the wholly mundane purpose of giving festive parties in the cherry season. Matsu had spent some of his own youth in that villa in charge of Mr. Soda and his wife, who was then alive. Dreary company, but the landscape was beauty itself, in that abrupt mountainous country strewn with the burial places of ancient emperors and the memories of their abandoned capitals.

A Japanese, on learning a matter of importance

to himself, discusses it first with his friend or friends ; an Englishman, as often as not, acts on his information without consulting any one. The Lord Abbot, on learning that there was something worth inquiry at Kamidani, was sufficiently interested to go and see what it was. Entirely on his own initiative (a word which had long gone out of use among the Johoji abbots !) he went to a garage—it was Tanaka's garage in Shitayoshicho—and hired a car. The mention of his objective sent a thrill through the garage. If it had also been known that the smart young man, in brown tweed-suit and Homburg hat, was the Lord Abbot, Count Matsumoto, himself, the thrill would have been ten times more powerful ; but Matsu was not as yet a familiar figure in the streets of his ancestral city.

It was a warm afternoon in early autumn—characteristic autumn colouring with the maple foliage turning to gold and red. The road, the main-road to Osaka, was very dusty, though there was not much traffic : the slow Kyoto carts drawn by black oxen ; a motor-car now and then—either a hireling, bashed and dented and stained, or the sleek limousine of some mercantile magnate ; a few rickshaws, relics of a passing age, the bare, brown backs of the runners glistening in the sun ; bicycles, single or in coveys, propelled by bare legs under " shorts " or bunched-up cotton kimonos—messenger-boys mostly and a few lads of the student type ; and then the foot-passengers dragging along their clattering, wooden *geta*—shaded by parasols, carrying bundles wrapped in coloured silk or cotton handkerchiefs, weary and silent, or chattering and laughing, the shifting population of the Japanese highway, with its gaiety and its endurance and its quasi-Chaucerian tradition.

Short of misty, low-lying Osaka with its tall, thin factory chimneys, the road to Yamato branches off to the left through the green tea fields of Uji, past the Phœnix temple, climbing thence upwards to Nara, the ancient capital, where are temples of millenary antiquity and the famous Kasuga shrine with its sacred deer. Then, on and beyond, through typical Japanese scenery—flat, golden rice-fields awaiting the harvest, and brown thatched farm-houses squatting behind high fences of green bamboo. Verdure everywhere, a green with undertones of yellow and gold —the shafts of the bamboos, the ripening rice, the sereing forests on the emergent mountain-slopes.

Closer and closer, the mountains shut down upon the road and its attendant agriculture. There was no highway now, but a bumpy country path. Soon the car was climbing up a very steep incline, and after a short run along the shoulder of the hill, it dipped down again into a much wilder valley. Here was the woodcutter's domain : logging operations were in progress, and ragged gipsy-looking men and girls were gathered round forest-fires. They stared at the passing car as at a strange and portentous creature.

A red *torii*, that double-lintelled archway which is the symbol of primeval Shinto, marked a further turning point. It told of the presence of some place or building of spiritual significance. The red *torii*, and the mere track which passed beneath it, led to the remote and secluded mountain lake of Kamidani (" Valley of the Gods ")—a round crater hole, a mile or so in diameter, rather sombre in aspect even on the brightest day, with waters of a leaden hue, shadowed by the vast domain of forest and mountain which rose sheer up from its shores and shut it in on every side.

At the further end, however, the landscape lightened. Here stood the unpretentious temple that guarded the sepulchre of some forgotten notable of very ancient days; and here was the famous cherry-orchard, which rambled in loose formation down the hillside, engulfing the temple, and streaming away down to the lake, leaping across the water and tufting the little island which was once the hermitage of Genson Shonin, founder of the Johoji Sect. A famous spot in spring time when crowds of holiday-makers arrive from Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto to savour the peculiar charm of that blend of pale coralline blossom, dark green pine woods, blue lake waters, and religious awe.

But in the autumn it is quite deserted; the cherry trees are stripped and bare, and the framework of the old temple-building emerges like a beggar's shrunken body through his rags.

On a bluff overlooking the lake and the cherry wood stands the Matsumoto *besso*, a bungalow building in châlet style with a sloping lawn descending to the water-side. It had been built for an abbot's pleasure parties in the leisurely days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. It was now the residence of the priest in charge and of his family, for the Johoji priesthood, it will be remembered, are allowed to marry. It was also sometimes used as a home for priests requiring a rest from their labours, but the situation was too remote and melancholy to be very popular.

It had been a summer holiday home for Matsu during his lonely childhood; and, returning now after so many years, he was surprised to find how the details of the landscape had shrunk, how narrow was the road, how small was the Saint's island where as a great treat he had sometimes been allowed to picnic, how confined was the temple-

courtyard, and how short the ascent thence to the imposing thatched gateway which led into the grounds of the villa. Measured by his baby stride all these dimensions must have been four times as great.

He had left the motor-car at the foot of the hill, and was climbing up to the *besso*, alone. What had he come to find? He was not sure. It could not be Sheila. How could she be here in Japan, in the remotest corner of Japan? But there might be news of her, a message from her, here, somehow. It was an ambiguous phrase which had brought him hither—to this beautiful, sad place which had once been his childish world. The sense of the "Ah-ness" of things (*Mono no aware*) caught him by the throat and brought tears to his eyes, as he pushed open the gate into his park.

At the end of the pebbled path, at the foot of the four or five broad stairs which led up to a wide porch, stood a girl, an English girl—brown dress, brown cloak, brown shoes, pale tow-coloured hair gleaming in the sunlight like spun silk.

"Joani San!"

The chauffeur was dismissed and sent back to Kyoto, car and all, before he had been able satisfactorily to solve the significance of this mysterious visit to the Valley of the Gods. The Lord Abbot remained behind in the *besso*.

CHAPTER XVII

WITH the suddenness of a typhoon the storm of revolution struck the Johoji temple. In its origin a spontaneous movement, it was guided to its catastrophe by watchful and calculating brains.

It was primarily a stirring among the priests themselves, and it might never have developed, had it not been for the great concourse of shaven heads, who had flocked into Kyoto from all parts on the occasion of the return of the young Lord Abbot from abroad. The priests who had assembled to greet him, lingered on partly in order to attend the course of sermons which the famous Okabé San was preaching twice a week to crowded audiences and partly in instinctive anticipation of important events. They thus constituted an informal but effective "*shuyé*," or Church Assembly.

It was the autumnal season of chrysanthemums and earthquakes. Nerves were ajar and aquiver. It was just over a year since Tokyo and Yokohama had been destroyed in a disaster unparalleled in Japanese history. The capital of the country laid waste, its chief port obliterated, one hundred thousand people killed! And this year, so croaked the pessimists, it was to be the turn of the Western cities. Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe were not to escape immune. Three shocks of exceptional severity had already set the *shoji* chattering, the roofs slipping, and the people thronging for safety to the open spaces.

But the immediate occasion of the flare-up on Maruyama was the Vice-Abbot's treasure-hunt. The (not very) Reverend Matsumoto Choren had conceived this bright idea for collecting funds for the Johoji—to sell tickets for a garden-party, a *kikurankwai* (or chrysanthemum-viewing assembly) to be held in the Abbot's garden, a very famous garden usually closed to the public. Each ticket entitled the holder to receive on entrance a coloured slip of paper inscribed with an allusive line of poetry that contained a clue to the hidden treasure. This

was to be found all over the extensive grounds of the temple park and even (it was subsequently alleged) in the sacred buildings themselves.

The party was extensively patronised by the Vice-Abbot's dilettanti friends and relations among the old Kyoto nobility ; it was, therefore, patronised no less by the upstart monied folk from industrial Osaka and commercial Kobe, who were overjoyed at the opportunity to rub shoulders with the aristocracy. A considerable number of tickets, too, had found their way to the theatres and geisha-houses ; so that the party, which ought to have been as decorous and dull as those which His Grace of Canterbury has to give every year at Lambeth Palace, ended up by becoming the most extraordinary jumblement—*monde* and *demi-monde* quarrelling over their respective treasures, or glowing with *saké*, as were the amiable little host himself and his particular cronies, Count Goto, Viscount Shitakoji, and Baron Fukuin.

Most of the prizes were absurd little fans and hand-towels of no pecuniary value, but there were some half-a-dozen "special prizes," among them antique images of Buddha and painted scrolls (*kakemono*), which (so it was whispered) came from the treasure house of the monastery. Quite a large sum was netted for the Johoji, and when evening darkness fell, the Vice-Abbot and his special friends adjourned for further potations to their favourite *machiai*, where the graceful (and costly) Wakaharu with her attendant nymphs made dance and melody for them into the small hours of the morning. *Domo omoshirokatta !* Indeed, it was amusing !

Next morning, however, things had taken a less amusing turn. The Vice-Abbot, headachy and bilious, was summoned by urgent telephone-call to

a conference of the Big Five. Further, he was advised to approach the Johoji buildings by way of a certain private entrance and not through the main porch.

On reaching the abbot's parlour he was received by the assembled council of the monastery, which included not only the Big Five but many other high officials. All had not gone so well at the garden party as his (almost) Reverence the Vice-Abbot had imagined. A number of up-country priests returning from Okabé San's sermon had collided with an intoxicated party of treasure-seekers. There had been words. The disgusting insult "*Kuso-bozu*" had been hurled at the priests within their own monastic enclosure. They had returned to the main temple to inform their brethren and to inquire what might be the meaning of these sacrilegious proceedings.

They had learned that this orgy of low merchants and abandoned women was their Vice-Abbot's idea of a pleasant Sunday afternoon. The "country priests" then and there decided to remain encamped in and around the temple until they had seen the Abbot himself and had taken such measures as would prevent any recurrence of the "treasure hunt." What those measures were to be, they had not yet decided, but they had passed a resolution not to return to their villages until they had secured their reforms. It was a "strike" of the priests of the Johoji Sect.

During the night, there had been goings and comings between the Reverend Naito's apartments and the camp of the disgruntled priests. The Superintendent's emissaries had dropped a word, which, although not yet adopted, was beginning to dominate the situation: "The Matsumotos must go!"

When the little Vice-Abbot stepped into the

council-chamber, he was greeted with an elaborate politeness on the part of Naito, which boded no good to him. The Oriental is never more polite than when he thinks he has his enemy at his mercy.

"It is very tiresome," purred Naito, "to have to trouble your Reverence with these silly quarrels of foolish country monks. But for the moment, it is a serious matter. Therefore, if it is now possible to consult the wisdom of the Lord Abbot, it would be a good thing, perhaps."

"The Lord Abbot is away," snapped Matsumoto Choren, fanning himself vigorously. It was hot, and he had a headache, and he did not like the Superintendent's manner.

"It would be better, if he came back," said Naito; "he is perhaps in Tokyo."

"I do not know where he is," said the Vice-Abbot. It was true. This unaccountable young man, who had become quite mad like a foreigner, had left his house two days before and had since given no sign of his whereabouts.

"That is very strange," said Naito with a side-long look as though the Vice-Abbot should have been more careful in guarding a "living Buddha."

"It was very strange of him to neglect my garden-party," replied the Vice-Abbot, huffily. He had intended that the young Count should make his social début at that unlucky party. He had been furious—no, he had not the stuff of fury in him, but he had been very fretful at his cousin's unaccountable absence. No doubt, he was enjoying himself in some *machiai*; that was in keeping with the family tradition, but it was undutiful of him to have missed the party. He glanced questioningly at his cousin, the Master of the Ceremonial. The old gentleman shook his head, and looked very glum.

The Matsumotos were at a discount that morning.

Now, Naito knew where His Holiness was, and why? Kawada, the Treasurer, had told him. The "Living Buddha" was in the Kamidani *besso*, with his English wife. He had gone there himself, of his own volition. He had walked straight into the trap, without any one even having to bother to set it.

There was no telephone at the Kamidani villa; it was completely cut off from the world. The Treasurer had despatched six trusty monks to guard His Holiness, to guard him so closely that he could not escape. His Holiness was the trump card in the present situation. The Treasurer intended to hold that card in his own hand. If the Abbot returned to Kyoto, his personal prestige could almost certainly restore the position, for the Japanese character is astonishingly loyal to its traditional leaders. But if the Abbot were kept away, the Matsumotos would fall, the dynasty would be dethroned, and after a certain moment it would be too late for them to recover power.

"I shall speak to these priests this afternoon," said the Vice-Abbot, shutting his fan with a click, to indicate decision. On the whole he was glad now that the Lord Abbot was unavailable. That young man would not have been competent to deal with this emergency so effectively as he, the Vice-Abbot, seasoned by five years of regency; he would not have known how to set these fools to the right about.

"They will make serious demands," suggested Naito.

"I shall know what to say," replied the Vice-Abbot.

"That is right; that is the Matsumotos' way of speaking." Naito seemed to be satisfied. Another

of these silly mice was walking straight into the trap.

He was right. The attitude, the manner, even the accent of the Vice-Abbot, in his reception of the priests' representatives, were those of a theatre *daimyo* rating his serfs. His round, smug face was rather flushed with *saké* and excitement.

"We wish to speak with the Lord Abbot," said the priests.

"It is not necessary," said the Regent. "His Holiness is away from Kyoto; he must not be troubled with this foolishness."

The priests retired, "eating their livers," as the Japanese expression has it. In the course of the night their ultimatum was conveyed to Naito's familiars. The Matsumotos must abdicate. Henceforth the Johoji Sect would elect its Lord Abbot by popular vote of the priesthood.

Next morning, the seriousness of the situation was emphasised in a way that was characteristically Japanese. At early dawn, a white-uniformed policeman rapped on the gate of the Vice-Abbot's residence, arousing a sleepy-faced lodge-keeper.

"A man is dead," he said. "Go, look and see."

In front of the ceremonial entrance, seldom used except on great occasions, lay the body of a monk, robed in full canonicals, soaking in a pool of blood—with a short sword still grasped in his right hand and with his stomach gashed open, in the ghastly fashion of old time *harakiri;* in his left hand he held a letter in which was explained the reason for his deed. Here were set out the misdeeds of the Matsumoto family, the sad plight of the Johoji and the need for reform; the recitation concluded with a request, in courteous, nay in humble, terms to the ruling house to resign its honours, as being in the

best interests of the community, which its illustrious ancestor had founded.

It was a protest impossible to ignore.

The Johoji affair, already smouldering, blazed up in the columns of the Press. There were political repercussions. The Government was somehow to blame; it always was. It was felt, though such things were never expressed in printing ink, that the prestige of the Imperial House was somehow (and unfavourably) affected, owing to its close relationship with the Matsumoto family. No bishop, no king! Japan had not formulated this "dangerous thought," but it was felt to be latent in the possibilities of the situation.

Matsumoto Chakuson, the fat Master of the Ceremonial, together with a host of lesser and thinner Matsumotos had taken refuge with his cousin in the secular city. The rebel priests remained encamped around the main temple building. Naito and Kawada were supreme within the monastery; the resident monks appeared to be completely under their influence. The saintly Okabé had retired to his parish in the slums of Osaka. He could deal with the quarrels of bullies and gamblers, but the internecine hatreds of his own brethren were beyond his competency.

"When Buddha's grace will save even a good man, how much more readily will he save the wicked!"

With this proverb of Genson Shonin on his lips he departed in sadness from the holy city.

The young Count Matsumoto was still absent. The newspapers had taken up the cry, Where is the Lord Abbot? Was there no one to save his tottering throne? Yes; the wizened little Mr. Soda, with his pinched blotchy face, his thin grizzled hair, his precise bird-like step and gesture, had been present

in the council-chamber at that last uneasy gathering of the Big Five. He had realised at once the danger which threatened his young master, both from his friends and his enemies. He had not known about the Count's untimely disappearance, and he suspected foul play; nor was he sure whom he could trust. He belonged to an earlier generation of the Johoji, and, especially after his absence in England, he had lost touch with the younger monks.

But there was one man of whom he was certain, Hanjiro. The Count had not entirely discharged his valet, but he had kept him at a distance, ever since his return to Japan. Even a Japanese servant cannot kidnap his master with absolute impunity.

So, Hanjiro had returned to a former Mrs. Hanjiro, a thick-set, masterful woman, who kept a small porcelain and earthenware store, one of about fifty or more which succeed each other up the steep, winding hill that leads to Kiyomizu. She sold dishes and plates and other domestic utensils, artistic tea-services, *objets de piété* for pilgrims, lucky snakes and foxes and badgers, imitation fruits and images of Amida, Fukusuké, Billiken, the aged couple of Takasago, and General Nogi. She was known, from the name of her shop, as Yamatoya San.

Sheltered behind Yamatoya San's ample kimono, Mr. Soda found the faithful Hanjiro. The Lord Abbot must be located at once, he explained; otherwise, all was lost. Hanjiro knew nothing about his master's whereabouts, but he had important and interesting news. The English woman had followed the Lord Abbot to Japan; she was being lodged secretly in the *besso* at Kamidani.

Mr. Soda slanted his head, looking more bird-like than ever.

"*Ma!* That is an important thing. If the woman

is there, then perhaps the Lord Abbot is there, too. Have you been to see whether this is true or untrue?"

"I have not been myself; I have heard such a story among the people of the Johoji."

"You must go at once; you will go by train to Nara, and from there you will take a bicycle. You will ride to Kamidani, and you will find out who is living there, and how they are living; whether there are priests or others on guard there; and how many; and their names, if possible. You will return quickly to Nara, and from there you will telephone to me under the name Toyohashi at the Bankokukwan Hotel; I shall wait there until I hear. You will speak to me as though about some business matter."

Off went Hanjiro, and Soda returned to his hotel.

Night had fallen before the long-awaited call came through from Nara.

"*Moshi, moshi! Moshi, moshi!* Is that Mr. Toyohashi? Yes. About the property which you are thinking of buying? Yes. The one with the pine tree (*Matsu*). Yes. The pine tree is there now. I have seen it, myself. It does not stand alone; no. There is another one with it. Yes. But that one is different from what we thought? Yes. It is also foreign-imported-article. But it is the old one, not the new one. I know; I am sure; I see for myself; I speak with these people. They would like to bring the pine tree back to the city; but they cannot do so. The gardeners would not let them. There are ten gardeners, all strong men. I had trouble with them, but they do not know where I came from. So, I thought it was best to tell you about the property. And now, this is the most extraordinary thing, but I have just seen the other foreign-

imported-article, the *new* one. I have seen it here, in this place, in the big foreign-style shop. It is better you come here and inspect for yourself, perhaps."

"I shall come at once," said Mr. Soda; and he meant it, for when he found that there was no convenient train starting for Nara that night, he at once hired a motor-car and left by road.

CHAPTER XVIII

HANJIRO'S mysterious telephone message implied, of course, that he had met, or seen, Sheila Mannifold herself, and that she was within a few miles of her fugitive husband. In the language of children's games, she was very warm, but quite unconscious of the rise in the temperature. On the contrary, the heat of her adventure was cooling off at an alarming rate.

After a day of rain and rest amid the pinchbeck splendour of the Kobe Hotel, Sheila and her brother had sallied forth, as though they were in an ordinary European city, to find the Johoji temple and news of Matsu. They thought it would be more circumspect to dispense with an interpreter's services. Sheila was still carried along by the impetus of her old self-confidence. She still felt, but with waning certainty, that she could get anything she wanted, anywhere.

"*Kyoto, itto ofuku.*"

First return to Kyoto—she had learned that much from the hall-porter at the Hotel. The spell worked; she got her ticket all right; by holding up two fingers, she got another ticket for Victor. That difficulty achieved, the rest was child's play.

No taxis at Kyoto station! That was the first

check. The rickshaw was an unfamiliar and alarming conveyance. To be trotted along in a kind of reversed perambulator-for-one by a queer little man under a mushroom hat, who talked volubly but understood not a word—it was rather fun ; but it did not inspire confidence.

" Aren't they sweet ! " said Sheila. " I must have one of my own ! Wouldn't he be a scream in Piccadilly ! Countess Matsumoto's rickshaw is at the door! What a thrill ! "

They sped on and on with long, swinging strides down the easy gradient which leads to the heart of the city. The ancient capital of the Mikados spreads itself at ease, regardless of space and distance.

" Do you think they know where they're going ? " grumbled Victor, who was not yet reconciled to Japan.

" They seem to know," said Sheila. She tapped her runner's shoulder with her parasol. " Johoji ? " she shouted with intelligent emphasis as though she were instructing an animal.

The rickshaw-man nodded and grinned. They were approaching an immense pebbled courtyard, with a huge temple building in the middle of it—a long façade of gigantic pillars like a wooden Parthenon with a very lofty roof. At the entrance, the rickshaws halted.

" Hongwanji temple," said Sheila's man, who knew this much of English.

" Johoji ? " queried Sheila.

They wasted at least half an hour, including much taking on and off of shoes, before they discovered that this temple was not the Johoji at all. They returned to their rickshaws.

" Johoji," said Sheila, rather severely this time.

The swinging descent was resumed. By the side of

a dusty grove of trees, where beggars were squatting in the shadow and children playing in the sunlight, they came to a halt again.

"Daibuts'!" grinned the rickshaw-man.

"Johoji?" asked Sheila. The man smiled and bowed. Beyond the grove, he pointed to a huge and hideous bronze image of Buddha, holding up a warning hand as though to check an invisible traffic.

"Matsu to the life!" said Victor. "It must be here!"

They wasted another twenty minutes before they found that it was not.

"Johoji! You understand, Johoji!" said Sheila, when she returned to her pram, rather cross by now. Her steed grinned again, and seemed to understand. Anyhow, he started off without any hesitation, He led the way to the red *torii* of the Gion Park, to the famous Geisha quarter, to the Daimaru department store, to the gates of the Emperor's Palace, and at last (providentially) to the Kyoto Hotel. This was a foreign-style establishment of some pretensions. Here, at any rate, Victor could get his drink; it was long overdue; and they could explain to an American-speaking clerk that they wished to visit the Johoji temple. The clerk interpreted what hardly seemed to require interpretation, to the growing amusement of the rickshaw-men. As they mopped the sweat away from their foreheads and necks into small blue-flowered towels, their grin spread into an inane laugh.

"What are those blighters laughing at?" asked Lord Mannifold.

"They say you tell them to go to Johoji! They laugh now because I tell them jes' same thing! That is Japanese good joke!"

"Very funny!" said Victor.

"That is *so!*" said the clerk.

Japan was like that, unaccountable and exasperating. When, at last, the straining and perspiring rickshaw-men had dragged them up to the broad terrace of the Johoji, and when they had secured the assistance of a seemingly English-speaking monk, they failed to convince him that they wished to speak with Count Matsumoto on a matter of private business. You see, foreign tourists in Kyoto are not in the habit of asking for such interviews, and in Japan you must do what you are expected to do; you will not be allowed to do anything else. So, they were shown round the different buildings; they were introduced to a number of famous Buddhas; they were invited to manipulate the huge wooden ram, which rings that lovely Johoji bell; they were shown silken rolls with exquisite paintings of religious subjects and scenes, and various autographs of celebrities, ancient and modern; they were escorted into the Abbot's garden, where that disastrous "treasure hunt" was to be held about ten days later; they were regaled with green tea and little rice dumplings called "Buddha cakes," a speciality of the monastery.

The stout shaven priest, although he could speak a little English, was quite unable to grasp any idea outside the circle of his own restrictions as to what foreign visitors to the Johoji might wish to see.

"Count Matsumoto, he come back Japan, you savvy?" shouted Victor, faithful to his theory that by loud bawling and broken English and elephantine gestures you can make foreigners understand.

"Johoji temple very great and old," beamed the monk, in reply.

"That's all right, old bean," said Victor, "but we wantee catchee Abbot—your number one boss—you compronny?"

The last word represented a fragment of French, thrown into the salad.

"Matsumoto! Matsumoto!" yelled Victor, but the old gentleman shook his head vaguely as though the name were quite unfamiliar.

"Here is beautiful look—Kyoto city," he said.

"We—want—Matsumoto," insisted Lord Mannifold, reducing his requirement to its simplest form.

"How you think Kyoto city or Tokyo city more fine?"

"We—want—Matsumoto!"

"*Jishin* (earthquake) come, now Kyoto city more fine, I think!"

"Oh damn!"

Sheila was gazing out over that bird's eye view of the ancient capital which to her Matsu must have been as familiar as the Houses of Parliament or Hyde Park Corner. Queer that she should be standing now where he had often stood as a boy! Queer and sad! For she would never find him now. Her intuition told her that—that marvellous feminine intuition which is almost always wrong. How could she find him among these myriads of little creeping brown men—all intent on failing to understand her? And if she did find him, what was the use? What could she say to him? He would misunderstand her, too. There would be nothing to say except—what was that famous word of his at the end of a round of golf or a set of tennis?

"*Shimai!*"

Finish! The comedy was ended, and Sheila, the flashing, the dashing, the amazing Sheila, the "Angel of Audley Street," felt like a fool. For the

first time in her life, she was fully conscious of that unpleasant and benumbing feeling. To chase a reluctant husband, a yellow husband, in a yellow land; it was indecorous, humiliating, absurd; it was not even modern, it was merely vulgar. She had reverted to romance; "Beneath the Cherry Blossom" and "Pearl of the Pacific"; it did not suit her style. What was Sheila Mannifold to this ancient and impenetrable city? A tourist, an intruder. In London, she had significance; in Kyoto, none. Yet, by all the laws of England and Japan, she was the wife of its youthful archbishop! Incongruous, monstrous. She was on the threshold of a vast and powerful world of which she had had no conception; in the centre of that world, she saw her Matsu, a golden Buddha on a lotus throne—behind him the strange, placid effigies of the Buddhist religion; around him, the choirs of monks; and in front of him, the myriads of the faithful, dependent on him for their salvation. In that world, there was no place for her. She would look hopeless on a lotus!

This much she had found out at the Johoji—that she had lost Matsu, for ever! This much she had learned from those odd, but beautiful Buddhas—the gesture of renunciation! She would buy herself a Buddha—they're so sweet, aren't they, so soothing!—the best Buddha she could get in all Kyoto; and with this memory of another world, she would return to her own.

Having found some wisdom but no knowledge in Kyoto, Sheila allowed herself to be carried off to Tokyo—a long day's journey in a hot and sticky train.

"Now we're here," said Victor, who rejected the doctrine of renunciation, as unsporting, "we must do something about it, damn it!"

This programme included a visit to the British Ambassador, who was a distant cousin of Sheila's aunt, Lady Castletown, and would, no doubt, receive his two distinguished and interesting relatives with enthusiasm.

Tokyo itself was not encouraging—a wilderness of wooden shanties, corrugated iron, disembowelled streets with pipes protruding, crapulous telegraph wires and mountains of rubble. The city had not yet recovered from the terrible earthquake of the preceding year; it had a stricken and lamentable appearance, and its inhabitants looked battered and harassed like the denizens of a war zone. The Embassy was housed in a large wooden shack near the dismantled walls of its former splendour. His Excellency too had an improvised air, and looked rather like Caius Marius amid the ruins of Carthage. He was in that kind of temper.

He was a great authority, it appeared, on the history and doctrine of the Johoji; but the human side of Sheila's story did not command his sympathy. The sight of beauty in distress did not excite him as much as did a Pali text. Even the name of Sheila Mannifold was lost upon him; he belonged, quite definitely, to an earlier period.

He entertained his cousins at a very copious, but rather silent dinner. After that, he passed them and their business on to Mr. Secretary Bledding, one of the Japanese experts on the Embassy staff.

"Mr. Bledding will help you, if any one can," said His Excellency. "I walk in the light, but he knows the paths of darkness."

There was something unctuous in His Excellency's manner, like that of a parson—without a gospel.

Hugh Bledding, a little, neat, swift, sleek man, like a black-haired lizard, was a welcome contrast

to that portentous Excellency. He fell in love with Sheila at first sight. He fell in love with the bright spirit that dwelt in her beauty, like those Oxford undergraduates, hopeless of earthly reward ! Fifteen years' residence in Japan had left him with very definite ideas about mixed marriages; and the notion of sexual commerce between any Japanese, however sacrosanct, and this fair, flaming vision of English beauty filled him with an explosive fury which seemed rather exaggerated to his less idealistic colleagues.

" What do you want me to do ? " he asked Sheila ; he was ready, at her bidding, to break into the Imperial Palace itself.

" Find Matsu," she answered, with a despondent little smile, which, like each of her gestures and expressions, merely served to strengthen her empire over him.

" Yes, and then ? " he said.

" I must see him myself."

" Do you want to take him back to England with you ? "

" Perhaps ! I don't know yet ! "

" Do you want to live with him here in Japan ? "

" Oh, no, no ; that would be awful. It's a queer, creepy country ; and so frightfully far away from everything. I'd perish here from melancholy and shudders ! "

" You're right, Lady Sheila." From their first introduction, he had invested her with the title of an earl's daughter ; inaccurate, but it suited her, and he never changed it.

" You're quite right. You can't live here. A pleasant country to visit ; interesting, too ; it has history, tradition, style. But it's not our style—nothing like it. We go to pieces out here—unless

we're very tough and stolid, just interested in import and export. But you and I, Lady Sheila——"

He made a wide gesture with his arms to indicate the distance between these two chosen spirits and those poor insensitive traders, who could tolerate exile in the Far East. Bledding was the son of a coal merchant at Harwich, and had had very little contact with "Lady Sheila's" world, which he knew chiefly from the picture papers. But here, at this delightful *tête-à-tête* tea-party in his own little Japanese house of wood and paper, he felt deliciously near to the inner sanctuary of life—rare, lovely and intimate.

"Mr. Bledding, find him for me; and I shall know what to do."

She rose out of his deep arm-chair, with a Cytherean grace. He kissed her hand, as he had seen foreign diplomats do at Embassy functions. He drove her down to her hotel in his two-seater. At the back of her mind, she had already christened him "Fido."

CHAPTER XIX

So it came about that Mr. Bledding of the British Embassy was present in Kyoto on the day of the Johoji garden-party. Being short and dark and speaking fluent Japanese, he had attended that function in the hope of picking up some useful information. He had found it, not at the party itself but among the disgruntled monks encamped around the temple. Here, he learned that Count Matsumoto Choson had returned to Japan, but that his present whereabouts were unknown. There was a suspicion that he had been kidnapped by his own family;

there was an alternative story about an English "*mekaké*" (mistress), whom he had brought back with him to Japan. He found that there was a certain personal sympathy with the young Lord Abbot, but a general detestation of the Matsumoto family as a whole.

"They live in luxury . . . they waste on geisha and fine houses the money collected from poor people in the name of religion . . . it is a shame to the Johoji sect . . . it is hypocrisy . . . the Matsumoto family are given the best temples throughout the country . . . but they do nothing for religion . . . just waste money, like *narikin* (war profiteers) . . . the Matsumoto family must go!"

Sheila Mannifold had evidently come looking for her husband at a critical moment in his career. When, next day, Bledding read of the priest's suicide outside the Vice-Abbot's gates, he knew that this was not merely a personal, but a national crisis. He wrote a long account for the Ambassador and forgot to look for the Lord Abbot that day.

Thus, it came about that Sheila herself discovered her missing husband in the most surprising and unexpected manner. In all these games of "Hunt the Thimble," what we are looking for is so often under our very noses. Sheila had given up her part in the search, until she had news of Bledding's inquiries. She was putting in time, visiting the show places and trying to identify the various temples with the assistance of Murray's Guide. Horyuji, Genkoji, Kakushiji—they all had names rather like Johoji—very beautiful, these homes of a restful and pacific faith, half-hidden in bowers of evergreen, the high curved roofs, the graceful pagoda-towers, the noble gateways, the spacious courts with their votive stone lanterns, the washing-troughs for ritual

ablutions, the attendant shrines and images of intrusive but tolerated gods, the wheeling shower of sacred pigeons—very beautiful, rather monotonous, but appealing to Sheila's mood and to her sense of self-importance. For had she not herself a place among these Buddhas? She had married into the family. They could not ignore her, altogether. She was the only Englishwoman who could claim blood relationship with Amida and Kwannon and Fudo and Shakamuni and Dainichi Nyorai. That in itself was unique, and Sheila gloried in uniqueness.

Victor had returned to Kobe. He said he had business there, but Sheila knew that he wanted to relax in the tea-houses. He must collect experience for his report on Japanese women, when he got back among his friends in London. They would all want to know! Besides, he wanted to know, himself! Chaps had told him such marvellous yarns; that Japanese women were differently shaped; that they had all sorts of odd tricks, unknown even in Paris; that they were dirt cheap, but hygienically dangerous. He would not be good, but he would certainly be careful.

So Sheila (with Gwennie) was "doing" the temples at Nara, where there seem to be more temples than anywhere else in Japan, and where there is an excellent hotel, Japanese in aspect but occidental in its comfort and its cuisine. She was more reconciled now to the consequences of her own stupidity. She was beginning to enjoy the mere sight-seeing side of her expedition. She, too, would have her stories to tell when she got home.

On the first evening of her stay at Nara, she had noticed a small Japanese in inconspicuous native costume watching her with particular attention, as she sipped her coffee in the spacious lounge of the

hotel. His round, bright face was somehow familiar to her; but really all Japanese are so distressingly alike that it is difficult to distinguish one from another. He was standing rather obviously in the shadow formed by a corner of the room, and he might have been one of those curio-vendors who haunt the beaten tracks of the tourist, only he did not carry the usual *furushiki*, the silk or cotton bundle enveloping his wares. He was gazing at her with a fixed and rather crazy stare, which scarcely wavered for about half-an-hour. This hypnotic attention got on Sheila's nerves. She went out for a walk in the moonlight by the side of the lake which curves like a moat round the hotel. On her return, she saw the same man again, sitting on a bench outside the hotel; at least, she thought he must be the same. She went straight up to her bedroom, and was particularly careful about bolting her door and her window.

Next morning, the white-coated "boy," who brought her breakfast and whose knowledge of English was limited to a grin, gave her an envelope with an air of mystery and a vague gesture towards the window as though to indicate the direction whence it had come. It bore as superscription the single word "MISS," written in block capitals. Within was a letter in would-be English, daubed with a brush-pen on to a pad of soft Japanese paper.

"DEAR MISS," it ran,—"I am Soda dear friend to your husband. He is in bad way. If you like him now you will see to me at once. I wait until. Your ever,—S. SODA."

Sheila laughed aloud—but in a moment her joy was overcast by doubt. Was there a catch in this? It read like a typical decoy letter. "Fido"

had warned her to be careful. She descended the stairs, looking alert and practical, in pleated skirt, brown leather jacket and beret, and with Gwennie as her bodyguard very similarly accoutred, for she wore the cast-off clothing of her mistress.

In the lounge, she saw the same small man standing in the same dark corner. Her intuition told her to seat herself in the chair nearest to where he was standing. He affected not to notice her, and drew a note-book out of his kimono-sleeve. While pretending to be making pencil notes in this book, Sheila could hear him murmuring to himself. He was speaking English—of a kind.

"You know me, Miss. I am Hanjiro. I am valet of Count Matsumoto; yes, in England. I come to house in Thames River, and I take him away. Bad trick to you, Miss; I am sorry for you, but I must do so for duty to *danna sama*—also Mister Soda San."

"Who is Mister Soda San?" asked Sheila, without raising her head. She was thrilling with excitement; her adventure was becoming an adventure, indeed. Damn that Fido and his caution! She would do just as she thought fit. Fido could rescue her later; he would just love it.

"Mister Soda San best friend of *danna sama*. How now he very fear for him. He think you can save; he think you only. He must see you now quick, he say. You come?"

"No, he can come to me. I shall stay here just where I am. I shall not go away from this place. You bring him, quick!"

"Now soon he come—with thing to sell, I think—so nobody know; but you know and I know, I think."

With these inscrutable warnings, Hanjiro glided

across the hall, looking more like his shadow than himself. Sheila lit a cigarette, and puffed serenely in the thought that things were about to happen. Gwennie, sitting upright on the edge of her chair, announced :

" Well I never ! What an impertinence, the little heathen insect ! "

" Shut up, Gwennie ! It's going to be exciting, after all. He's somewhere near here, and they want me to see him, now ! They must be quite desperate ! Why ? "

" You mean you'll find him, madam, after all."

" I think so."

" And it will gladden you to see him, madam ? "

" I don't know yet, Gwennie ; I think so."

" Then you really love him, madam ; you truly do indeed ? "

" I think so, Gwennie."

" Well, if you're not so sure, madam, I'd think again, I truly would. It's a heathen and inhuman country, it is indeed ; and I don't like the way they look at you all sideways and slanting ; and I don't like the gibberish they talk. It seems no good talk to me whatever. And they are not chapel folk, or even church folk or papists—but absolute rank heathen—such as I never thought to see in the whole world ; I could never think that God would allow them. It's awful to think of it ; and as soon as you and I are away out of it, madam, I shall fall flat on my knees and give thanks for our escape."

Poor Gwennie ! She had no use for strange lands. She longed for the scented luxury of the Mayfair studio, and for the hard little iron-grey cottage among the Carmarthenshire hills.

Sheila lit another cigarette, and then another. Would the mysterious Mr. Soda never come ?

And when he came, would he bring her Matsu with him? And what were the fear, and the danger and the secrecy, all about?

Then she saw them, Hanjiro and another, kicking off their wooden shoes at the entrance to the hotel. They came straight towards her, with the deferential but insistent air of commercial impostors. They bowed simultaneously, making that curious intake of breath, that inward hiss, which is the usual Japanese salutation. Then they squatted on the floor at Sheila's feet and from a dark blue kerchief unrolled a series of little objects—ivory *netsuké*, lacquered *inro*, inlaid boxes and cigarette cases of damascene work.

"I am Soda," said Hanjiro's companion, explaining himself in very low tones. "All the time our young master in England, I am in England also—to watch. I watch him to your house. He stop too long time, I think; so we bring him back to Japan. It seem right to do, then; but now, I do not know; perhaps wrong. I am sorry for you, Miss. We never think of you; perhaps your heart break. We do not care; we think only of him. He is our young master. He is everything for us, quite. You understand?"

As he spoke, his claw-like fingers set out his little stock-in-trade, with instinctive grace of arrangement; and there was a force and determination in his curiously inaccurate accents which commanded attention and sympathy.

"He is now in danger," he concluded.

Sheila was aquiver with excitement, rather than with emotion; but she affected unconcern, and handled the little curios with the air of a possible purchaser.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"In a near place," replied Soda.

"What is the danger?"

"He is prisoner."

"Why?"

"Because our Buddhist priest uprise against Matsumoto. They are—like Bolshevik. Miss, I think understand?"

"And they will kill him?"

"Not kill, perhaps; but kick out, quite."

"And these Bolsheviks have got him in their power?"

The word, Bolshevik, was quite inaccurately used, but it was cleverly chosen to colour an impressionist picture and to enlist the girl's support.

"They guard him in his country-house," said Soda; "he never know what is done in Kyoto. When he come out, then it is too late. All finish! No more Matsumoto; then we have like President in our Johoji—President and Soviet!"

"And Matsu will be ruined?"

"All ruin; all kick out; he kill himself, I think—Japanese *harakiri*."

A grin lit up the thin blotchy face of Mr. Soda, for the Japanese cannot speak of death without smiling; not because it is funny, but because it is an embarrassing subject.

"Why do you want me?" asked Sheila. "What can I do?"

"He will do what Miss say him, if he see Miss."

"And what am I to say then?"

"Say him he must come to Kyoto—now, quick. He must say all those bad priests, I am Matsumoto of Johoji, I am grown from Matsumoto Genson, the holy man. I am your master, you will obey. Go back to your villages and your temples, go and say your prayers, and leave your government to me."

His voice was still low, but he spoke with an increasing intensity that was infectious. Sheila was beginning to enjoy herself in Japan.

"You mean that if he comes back to Kyoto, his loyal priests will fight for him, and the Bolshies will be dished; but if he does not get back in time, they will dish him."

"Miss, you understand very well; they dish; so it is—they dish, quite."

"But what can I do?" Sheila repeated.

"Miss, you can save," said Soda. "He worships you, like God; all the time in steamer he think only of you; *Kawaiso des'!* It is pity! 'Sheila! Sheila!' he weep in sleep like that. You say him one little word, he come."

"You can say that word to him yourselves."

"We can say and he can come, but then, he come like dead man. Miss, you say the word and he come like live man, like master. Now, he have no heart. But when he see Miss, then he have heart; I too I have heart when I see Miss."

Thus the dexterous Soda was mixing flattery with his appeal.

"And if he becomes Lord Archbishop, or whatever it is, again, what shall I be?" asked Sheila.

"You are his Countess," said Soda. "You will have great honour among us, because you save Johoji; your son will be grown from blood of Genson Shonin, and he will be Lord Abbot one day, quite."

Sheila's smile did not penetrate Mr. Soda's portentous sense of the honour thus conferred on a fair-haired foreigner. He had made a bolt of some of his toughest principles; but this was not a time to haggle; the Johoji required this woman's help; the Johoji must honour its obligation.

"We are *samurai*," he said, "there is duty to do."

The queer dry little man had style, and style in any shape appealed to Sheila. She misdoubted her qualifications as Lady-Abbess, but she wanted to see Matsu again; she wanted to test her feelings for him in a personal encounter. In any case, she wished him well. She did not fully understand the crisis in his affairs, but she did not want him to be "kicked out" by a lot of Bolshy monks.

"When must he be in Kyoto?" she asked.

"At once," answered Soda, "to-day."

"All right," said Sheila, "I'll come."

The two Japanese, squatting over their merchandise, bowed so low that their foreheads almost touched the blue kerchief.

"I'll take this Buddha," said Sheila, fingering an ivory statuette, "but ten yen too much! I give you five yen."

"It is loss to me, but if Miss wish, Miss have; and to-day I show Miss one much more beautiful Buddha."

"You bring it here?"

"No, he is too big to take. Miss must go see. Miss know Nara Hakubutsukwan—Nara famous museum; there are many Buddhas and pictures, very old. Miss come out of Hakubutsukwan at two o'clock; at door she see motor-car. Chauffeur say her Miss want to see Buddha. Miss say, Yes, and get in motor-car. Miss understand—quite?"

"Quite," replied Sheila.

The two Japanese bowed low, once more. They gathered up their kerchief, and departed. Sheila was left to her reflections. Perhaps this was a kidnapping conspiracy; that seemed to be Mr. Soda's speciality. She did not care. It would be an adventure, anyhow. Things were beginning to happen; that was the real thrill.

But one other motive of Mr. Soda's *démarche* had not been revealed to her—the all-important fact that Joan Avery was with Matsu, a prisoner in the Kamidani villa—very willing victims both of them, unconscious of their plight, ignorant of the events that threatened them, holiday-making and love-making by the shores of Genson Shonin's sacred lake. Soda had guessed, from Hanjiro's report, that the Lord Abbot had fallen under the influence of his old love, and his scheme was to counteract this by the influence of a love yet stronger. His king was masked by a pawn ; he would move his queen out to combat.

CHAPTER XX

WELSH GWENNIE had been packed off to Kobe with a flea in her ear. Her mistress was sick of her incessant complaining and her assumption that all the amenities of Mayfair ought to be procurable among the mountains of Yamato.

" I never saw such shops in all my life," such was the girl's impression of Nara ; " there's nothing anybody can want, no, really ; and that green tea of theirs is quite awful."

" Well, you can go back to Kobe and wait for me there ; I am going to stay on here for a day or two," said Sheila. She had made up her mind to play a lone hand, to go with the two mysterious champions of the Matsumotos, and to find her husband herself—that is, if they were not lying to her. If they were, it meant that she, like Matsu, would be kidnapped and held as a prisoner—perhaps worse. She remembered Black Jack's warning.

But, if she were to tell any one what she was going

to do, they would try to dissuade her; and when Sheila Mannifold had made up her mind to do anything, she did it. So, she herself saw Gwennie into her train, and then drove straight from the railway station to the museum. It was just two o'clock. Another car, a closed Buick, was waiting near the entrance. Sheila paid her own chauffeur, and watched him drive off in the direction of the town. As she turned towards the door of the museum, a long, lean Japanese, in a dark, close-fitting European suit, approached her. She noticed that he wore a straw hat and white spats—incongruous and comic. The man raised his boater, and bowed.

"Missa wisha see Buddha," he said.

"Yes," she answered, and got into the car. She expected to find Soda or Hanjiro there, but, no, she was alone. Alone, and dashing away at great speed over a bumpy road towards an unknown destination. She was sorry now that she had sent Gwennie away; even that querulous midget would have been better than nothing. It was stiflingly hot, too, and she could only open one of the windows.

After twenty minutes or so, she knocked on the glass in front of her. The driver drew up at the side of a sloping tea-plantation. He put on his straw hat in order to take it off to his passenger. His manner was most courteous. He looked more like a clown than a cut-throat.

"Where we go?" asked Sheila.

The man grinned, bowed, and gabbled something in Japanese.

"Very far? We go—far?" she asked, pointing vaguely to the clear line of grey-blue mountains; they rose out of the haze that exhaled from the intervening cultivation.

"Yess," said the chauffeur, pointing in the same

direction and bubbling over with explanation. It was maddening to hear so much and to understand so little.

"You—Johoji?" asked Sheila.

"Yess," shouted the man, his excitement visibly increasing at every renewed sign of intelligence in this strange, white woman.

"Soda San?" continued Sheila, breaking across the flood of his talk.

"Yess," he screamed, and pointed again towards the mountains, this time quite spontaneously.

"How—far?" shouted Sheila, showing (rather rashly) the watch upon her wrist—diamonds and platinum, a gift from Lord Glenbrigg. The chauffeur—by this time Sheila had christened him "Grock"—with a very dirty third finger, traced half an hour, or six hours, on the tiny dial.

"Soda San—oh, yess!" he said.

"Quick—fast—*hayaku*," said Sheila, flinging out one of her half-dozen Japanese words, as she stepped up into the car.

"Grock" certainly responded to that magic word. The car bounded forward like a launch across a stormy sea—up from among the rice fields, and the low farm-houses, folded in their pens of bamboo, up into the forest country, the world of sawn logs and woodcutters' fires, up hill and down again, and thence to a sudden halt by one of those red gateways into nothingness, which to Sheila seemed so entirely Japanese and inexplicable. After looking up the road and down the road, with an air of profound precaution, Grock, who had replaced his hat, gave a peculiar and significant whistle; and out of a thicket, behind the *torii*, bareheaded, in eminently respectable Japanese garb, appeared Soda San and Hanjiro.

Sheila, in her excitement, jumped out of the car, but was hastily motioned back again. The Japanese were bowing to her in front of the car, mindful of courtesy even at this moment of crisis.

" Beware ! " said Soda, melodramatically : " this place very full of fear."

" He's here ? " Sheila asked.

" Not far," said Soda, placing his finger to his lips—a useless precaution considering the noise that the motor was making as it lumbered painfully down the forest track.

" We bring him to you," said Soda, with unnecessary compression, " and then you bring him to us ; quite ! "

He would give no further explanation.

It was a gorgeous autumn afternoon. The sunlight burnished those sheer mountain sides with a glory of copper and gold. A hill stream accompanied them, purling on its way. There was no sign of wild life, until somewhere in the distance a cock pheasant croaked—quite an English touch, that ! They did not pass or meet a single human being. There was something very strange and creepy about those silent, flaming gorges.

" What is the name of this place ? " Sheila inquired.

" Kamidani ! Valley of gods ! "

After two or three miles of that sort of thing, the car drew up by the shores of a small lake. It was strangely still. There was not a breath of wind, nor a ripple on the surface of the leaden waters ; no fish rose ; no bird crossed the burning dome of the sky. The shadow of the mountains dissected the oval expanse with a clear, straight seam, like a heraldic shield, party per bend, argent and sable. Sheila felt that she had travelled further in those few

miles than in the whole of her trans-Siberian journey. She had reached the gateway into another world—the Land beyond the Sun. She was very glad that she had come.

A tremendous conference in Japanese was proceeding between Soda, Hanjiro and the chauffeur—much pointing across the lake, shaking of heads, hissing of breath. They seemed to have forgotten Sheila's presence. She sat and fanned herself with a little fan of Soda San's. No explanation was given to her.

After about half an hour, the car bumped slowly forward along the rough road which skirted the sunny side of the lake. All the Japanese were on the look-out for something. Once they stopped—at a false alarm—the crash of a stone or log somewhere in the forest. Then, suddenly, they heard the awaited signal—the note of a flute, high and plaintive. They halted. The note sounded again, quite close; and a man, in countryman's garb—dark blue tunic and trews—stepped out of the undergrowth. He jumped on to the car beside the driver. They went forward again for about three hundred yards and then turned off the road into a forest clearing which had once been a woodcutters' encampment. Here, a grey lichenous cliff overhung an open space; and in a fold of the cliff was a narrow cave. Out of this orifice, eight savage-looking scoundrels were clambering. They carried swords in their belts and stout staves in their hands; but their heads were shaven; they were Johoji monks.

"Well, Mr. Soda San?" Sheila asked, catching at his sleeve as he was about to alight. "I want to know what this is all about."

"Not now, not now," the priest answered, impatiently. "This is no time."

"Who are these toughs?" she insisted.

"This is not tough; he is clergyman," said Soda. "All very good man, I trust. Now, come," he added, as he helped her to descend, "we leave here our motor-car. He is too loud to go more near, quite."

The bandits—or hermits, whatever they were—were bowing to Soda, who bowed in turn. He was evidently to be the general in command. Every one sat or squatted, and another interminable conference began. This jabber-jabber-jabber was getting on Sheila's nerves. At last, she said:

"Aren't we going to do anything? it will be dark very soon."

"We wait for dark," answered Soda. "But first I bring you a prisoner, I think," he laughed a dry, crackling laugh, which had developed with the excitement of the situation.

And it was so. Sheila, inattentive to the gabble of the conference, suddenly heard, or thought she heard, in the distance, the rattle and thump of a motor; then a pause; then a scream.

The others had heard the scream, and there was silence. Then, from the direction of the road came three more bandits dragging two other men. The prisoners were securely roped; they were gagged and blindfolded. They wore dark kimonos and had shaven heads; they too were monks. Their captors placed them in the midst of the group, and Soda San began to ask them questions. Evidently their replies were unsatisfactory, for they were dragged away for purposes of persuasion to a tree with convenient branches. An end of the rope that bound them was thrown over the bough; and by dexterous jerks they were brought up on tiptoe and even higher in a way that must have half-dislocated wrist and shoulder. The men groaned in their agony and

begged to be spared, evidently promising to answer all questions with candour. The interrogation then proceeded.

Sheila learned afterwards that these were two of the body-guard placed by Kawada and Naito to watch the Lord Abbot. They were going by car—a very disreputable open Ford—to the nearest town to get supplies for the villa. They had been stopped by logs thrown across the roadway. When they were stooping down to remove these, the ambush had leapt out and trussed them up. It had been a very neat bit of work. A detachment of the enemy had thus been cut off, and the whole of his transport captured.

"All well—quite well," Soda San explained to Sheila; "to-night we take him, I think."

Weary of the endless confabulation, she had retired to the comparative comfort of the Buick limousine. The intense heat of mid-day had abated; it was cooler now, but the close stillness of the atmosphere remained. It was dream weather, and a dream adventure. It was a dream that she, Sheila Mannifold of Mayfair, was here alone among these savages; it was a dream that Matsu, her husband, a savage also, whom she had left on the banks of the Thames, was here, waiting for her, by the shores of the Lake of Kamidani. She would see him again, within a few hours' time, and what would she say to him? What dream words would come to her to say? She had begged of him once to be her lover. She had made him her husband. She had pursued him across half the world. Was anything left of that midsummer madness? Very little, she thought. It would be Hail and farewell, then. Probably no more than that. But, at least, she would have vindicated herself in her own eyes. She would have achieved her

object, and that through her own energy and daring—Sheila's way!

Soda's wizened face, speaking to her through the open window of the car, aroused her.

"Couldn't you have done all this without me?" she asked.

"Your time come now," he answered; "I show you; come, please!"

She climbed out of the car, and walked with Soda out of the forest clearing, across the road, down to the shore of the lake.

"You see," said Soda.

The colour of the lake had changed from silver to gold, save where its further banks were obscured in falling shadow and rising mist. But westward, where the sun was setting, a flood of golden light dazzled the eyes.

"You see," said Soda, "the island of Genson Shonin."

From the flat expanse of waters, a field of cloth of gold, rose a small conical hill, or large mound. It looked very like a hat, thought Sheila, quite a fashionable hat, but over-trimmed with plumes and chiffon. In contrast with the sunshine, it was black as soot. The whole effect was just like that damascene work which one buys in the Kyoto shops—cigarette-cases and boxes—a landscape in black and gold.

"Genson Shonin," explained Soda, "was like a prince in Japan; he was ancestor of our Matsumoto Choson; he was son of our great family Fujiwara; it is the family of the empresses of Japan—now also, quite. Genson Shonin can live all his time in gay life of Kyoto court; he is so rich; making love, poetry, hunting, feasting, making such fun—like Prince Genji; ah! but Miss cannot know our

Japanese story; very fine, anyhow, like Buckingham Palace. But Genson Shonin say, not so, no fun to me; too many sad, poor people, all die some day. So he become priest. No woman, no poem, no feast and wine, just pray and beg, pray and beg, all day. This too is not human life, he think, this is too hard, this is beast's life; and many priests no good at all—they lie and steal and are worse than bad man because the way is too hard for man's strength. Then Genson Shonin say; the Court life, no good; the priest's way, no good; only by love of Buddha, do I escape from hellish life—nothing else matter at all, if only I truly believe, love of Buddha can do all. This prayer we call our Namu Amida Butsu. So, he tell all people and say: 'Do not try to be good—for that way is pretence; live a human life, pray to Buddha and trust him, then you will be good, and death will be no fear, for you go straight to Buddha's heart.' So Genson Shonin himself live human life, not harsh life like priest, but smiling like the sun; he marry wife and make children, and still he smile; and very many people believe him, because he speak truth and because he teach an easy way. So the bad priests are angry with him, and they tell the Emperor to kill Genson Shonin. But the Emperor say, 'No, I do not kill; he is not bad man; but I send him away from Kyoto'; for he fear rebellion and fight in the city. Then Genson Shonin come all alone to this place. He live in the island you see there. Twelve years he live there. That island is still full of the holy thoughts he made while he live there; for our bodies die, but our thoughts are living things, they never die. The thoughts of Genson Shonin are living in that place to-day; so it is a very holy place to us—like your Stratford-on-Avon."

"What happened to him after the twelve years?" asked Sheila, when at last her Mentor paused in his outpouring.

"There was a new Emperor," said Soda, "who believe all that Genson Shonin said. He call him back to Kyoto, and sent a white horse and many court princes to bring him. But Genson Shonin said, 'I come here on my feet; on my feet I go back to the city. I do not go willingly, because I am happy here; I go because of my wife and children, to make them happy as I am.' So he went back to Kyoto, but he lived outside the city on the hill, where now is the Johoji Temple. He made happy more people than any man ever in Japan; and he is ancestor of our Matsumoto Choson."

Why this long historical disquisition while even now the golden light was beginning to fade, and the dark shadows were stretching out their curtains across the lake?

"Why are you telling me all this?" Sheila asked.

"Because we go now to the Island of Genson Shonin. To-night we bring there our master, Matsumoto Choson. You must know then how he may feel. He see you there—the Miss he love so much; he see also the spirit of Genson Shonin. He thinks his thought; 'Go back to Kyoto; go back and make the people happy.' He hear Genson Shonin think this thought; and then he hear you say with well-known voice so dear: 'Come back, come back to Kyoto—you and I, together.' I think then he come back, he cannot help himself coming, and like Genson Shonin he come back in victory. Quite!"

CHAPTER XXI

THEY rowed her out at sunset time to the Island of Genson Shonin. It was a crazy little boat like a punt, which Hanjiro had most fortunately found by the lakeside and commandeered. It provided access to the island and thereby an advanced base of operations within striking distance of the enemy's position.

Two men stood in the stern, and "yulohed" the boat along. Soda sat in the bows and Sheila in the middle. It was the short, dramatic twilight of Japan. The sun had sunk behind the western hills; and in its fall had splashed up into the sky a cascade of purple flame, breaking like a torrent inverted over jags and boulders of sombre cloud and descending in shimmering mist to the unruffled surface of the lake, where it settled in broad sanguine pools. The island ahead was quite black and in texture like those pictures of cut velvet which tourists buy in Japan. The water was like oil.

Sheila dipped her finger; the contact was surprisingly warm.

"It's quite hot!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Soda, "there is hot spring down under the lake. They say that Genson Shonin spit in the lake and make it hot with his spit. But that is silly story."

How heavenly to bathe in that mysterious, natural warmth, in the red pools of the sunset or in the silver track of the moon! Sheila felt inclined to shed her raiment, and to plunge, then and there.

Soda pointed to a dim shape on the dark hill ahead.

"That is his house!" he said.

As they drew nearer, Sheila could discern the pale glimmer of the *shoji*, lighted from within. There, in the middle of that glow-worm glimmer, sat Matsu, unconscious of her approach. Her runaway husband! Cornered! What a scream!

Then, suddenly and noiselessly, the dark shoulder of the island interposed itself; and in a few minutes they had landed on an outcrop of rocks.

It was a bit of a scramble in the semi-darkness to find the overgrown pathway which led up to the derelict temple on the summit of the hill.

"This is place where Genson live," said Soda. "You think it is very poor and dirty place; but it is holy place to us, quite."

The temple buildings formed a square paved enclosure, approached under the inevitable *torii*—of grey stone, in this case. At the further end of the tiny courtyard stood a rough penthouse covering a faded image of Amida Buddha with his two celestial attendants. At the side of this pathetic little rural shrine was a tiny Japanese house, one room and a kitchen, supposed to be the authentic scene of the saint's banishment. Of course, the little house had been destroyed and rebuilt many times since the days of Genson Shonin, but so simple was its form and furniture, that probably the intervening centuries had changed its appearance very little.

The paper windows slid open, and a red-faced boy, another member of Soda's bodyguard, was bowing a welcome to his master and to Sheila. He had been landed on the island early that morning in order to prepare the little house for the Lord Abbot's entertainment. It was swept and garnished. *Zabuton*, the cushions for squatting, which the Japanese use instead of chairs, were arranged on the *tatami*, round a tray

with teapot and cups. A tiny iron kettle simmered over a square box of charcoal. The acrid smell of the charcoal, and the sour smell of pickled radish impregnated the atmosphere; it made Sheila cough.

She smiled.

"I am sorry for you," said Soda San. "It is true smell of Japan. How often in your London my heart wish for that smell."

Sheila could not help liking the queer, intent, bird-like little man. He seemed quite unconscious of her sex, or her race; he treated her with surprising unconcern, as though there was nothing extraordinary in marooning a famous London beauty for a whole night (it seemed) on an island in the wilds of Japan; yet he was quite polite about it. He assumed that she was inspired by the same spirit of absolute devotion to the Matsumoto family which had guided his whole life. He assumed this with such conviction, that Sheila herself was half-convinced. This adventure was not only comic and exciting. Sheila was beginning to be vaguely aware of something fine and magnanimous—something which she too had shared at one time but which had been slipping away from her since the Oxford days.

"Miss will stay here, until we bring him back with us," said Soda.

"No, she will not," Sheila corrected him, emphatically, "this place is much too creepy, it's like a churchyard. If you're going, I'm coming, too."

Soda reflected for a moment with head on one side; this was a deviation from his plan, and he was thinking of that other woman, of Joan Avery, up there with Matsu in the villa; but he had to humour Sheila; she was all-important to his strategy.

"I fear there will be fight," he said. "If Miss

come too, you must wait in boat, wait until Matsumoto Sama come. If he no come, you must row back here and tell Keiichi—he stop in little house—so that he bring you back to Nara. Miss understand, quite ? "

" Miss understands perfectly. She didn't come for this joyride to be left out of the fun at the end ; and if there's any fighting, she's in it."

" Oh, no fight," smiled Soda, shaking his head. " No fight for Miss."

Keiichi served tea ; they were squatting in the little house, Soda and the English girl ; it was growing quickly darker, so that Sheila could no longer distinguish the faces around her ; but Soda had forbidden all lighting of lanterns, lest this might give the alarm on shore. Bats fluttered to and fro in the twilight outside, squeaking like mice. Keiich bowed low before Mr. Soda and offered a remark in Japanese.

It was listened to with attention.

" Keiichi San is right," said Soda ; " perhaps Miss look more better in Japanese kimono."

Sheila laughed.

" Perhaps she would," she said, " but she forgot to bring her luggage ; she did not know this was going to be an all-night job."

" Keiichi San has brought a Japanese *yukata* for Matsumoto Sama ; rather stern shape for woman perhaps, but more suiting than foreign dress."

Evidently the brown leather jacket and pleated skirt, which Sheila was wearing, was considered incongruous in Genson Shonin's hermitage. Keiichi unfolded a white cotton kimono with a thin black stripe in it ; and this coarse-grained garment Sheila wrapped about her after she had shed her occidental dress. There was no mirror in which she could study

the effect of her transmutation, but both Soda and Keiichi seemed to approve. The two others were called up to inspect and criticise.

"Yess," said Soda, "wife of our Matsumoto Sama must wear Japanese kimono. It is right. But very funny to wear gentleman's *yukata*"—here he began to laugh, the first real laugh which Sheila had heard coming out of him; it became more and more convulsive and hysterical. "All—the—same," he gasped, "English—lady—wear—gent's—frock—coat—very—funny,—quite."

But the seizure subsided as suddenly as it had come on. He rose stiffly from his cushion, and stepped down from the floor of the house into the temple courtyard.

"We go now," he said.

They descended the steep path into what was now a grey blue depth of mist and water. Fire-flies hung on the branches around them, or drifted listlessly groundward. In the distance glowed the lighted windows of the Lord Abbot's *besso*. From the water level, it seemed to float high in the air like a noiseless aeroplane.

At Soda's direction, a flare of twigs and shavings was lit. This signal was answered from two directions.

"Attack start now," said Soda. "Six men perhaps in temple house; six men perhaps in *besso*. We attack the temple first, and tie up the men. If they no cry out, then men in *besso* never know. If they cry out, we start at once."

There was no light in the direction of the temple and cherry-grove of Kamidani. Either the house was shuttered or it was screened from the island by trees or rocks.

It was the most tense and thrilling moment of the

adventure, waiting in that inky blue twilight for what sounds might come out of the mist. It was hot, too, weirdly hot, for near to the sacred island was the place where the warm springs welled up beneath the surface of the lake.

Suddenly, the silence was rent—by a harsh scream like that of a beast, which shook the mist and was as suddenly stilled. Gagged and bound! Sheila could imagine the swift efficiency of that attack, and the brief moment of hatred and struggle.

"Now, we go," said Soda.

They got into the boat, and headed for the shore. There was no further sound except the clatter of the oars and the lapping of the waters.

They reached a ramshackle landing-stage, and here they moored the boat.

"Wait here," Soda whispered to Sheila. "We bring him to you."

To his great relief, she was content to stay quietly in the boat. He had greatly feared the explosive possibilities of a meeting between those two white women who claimed the Lord Abbot. He had said nothing whatever to Sheila about Joan. This complication might have wrecked his plans.

"Japanese woman difficult to know what," he thought, "but foreign woman quite impossible to know—like a snake in the hand—like a firework—pom!"

It was a stiff climb up from the lake, but Soda remembered very clearly the details of that garden where he had tended the youth of the Lord Abbot. He knew that after a steep and rocky ascent he would reach a kind of plateau covered with bamboo grass which sloped gently up to the verandahs of the villa. At the edge of the plateau, he instructed

his guards to wait. He himself walked up to the house, alone.

The principal living-room which fronted the lake was brightly lit from within, but there was at first no sound. Then came a woman's voice, speaking in English, high-pitched and nervous:

"Matsu, what does it mean? I'm frightened."

"I'm not shu-arr yet," came the Lord Abbot's reply; "but it's all right, Joani dear; these are my own men from Johoji; they won't hurt you."

"They frighten me, Matsu; send them away!"

At this moment, Soda thought fit to tap on the *shoji*. The girl screamed.

"Who is there?" asked Matsu, in Japanese.

"This is Soda; it's all right!"

The *shoji* were pushed aside, and Soda looked into the room which was lighted with gauzy lanterns standing on lacquer frames. By the inner door squatted two of Soda's army; and a third had just opened the window. All three bowed low as their general entered; and he, in turn, prostrated himself before the Lord Abbot.

He paid no attention whatever to Joan Avery, who, clad in a blue kimono embroidered with butterflies, clung to his master's arm in evident terror. Matsu soothed her from time to time; but as Soda proceeded with his story (in Japanese) he became less and less attentive to her.

When, with a final reverence, his mentor had concluded, Count Matsumoto replied (also in Japanese).

"You are right, Soda San; I shall return to Kyoto." Then he added in English, "But what shall we do with Joani San."

"I come with you, dear. Wherever you go, I must go, too. We shall never be parted again! Never!"

Something in the fall of the corner of the Lord Abbot's mouth indicated to Soda that this fidelity was irksome to him.

"Dear Miss," he said, "I am sorry for you. This is business matter—for man, not for pretty woman. You stay here. Very soon Matsumoto Sama come again, quite. That is much better, I think."

Matsu rose to his feet. He was wearing a white kimono, bound by a dark sash.

"That is better," he said. "Joani sweet, be good girl and stay here."

She was clutching his arm with both her hands. If he leaves me now, she thought, and goes back to Kyoto alone, that other woman is waiting for him, she will get him and I am lost.

"Never!" she cried. "Never!"

At a gesture from Soda, two of the bodyguard were beside her. With sudden blows on the elbows they loosened her grip, and with wrists far more powerful than hers they seized her. Matsu and Soda moved away towards the open window. She screamed and squirmed, but those jiu-jitsu shackles on her arms merely tightened. She screamed again, and that unearthly yell pierced the misty darkness and echoed far away across the lake. It quickened the heart-beats of Sheila Mannifold, as she waited, nervous and intent, on the little landing-stage by the steaming water.

"Good God! They're murdering some one up there! Matsu! Matsu!"

Her orders were to wait, not to move away from her post unless danger threatened, in which case she might get back into the punt and push away from the shore. She stepped into the boat and lifted one of the oars, but that was all. There were no further screams, but presently the sound of footsteps and

voices talking in Japanese. Sheila rested on her oar, ready to push away, but uncertain what to do. The moon had just risen over the hills at the further end of the lake—a great harvest moon like a golden salver. Sheila could see the shapes of the men as they clambered down the cliff. The small spidery individual, she thought, must be Soda San; the taller one, in the white kimono, looked like—yes, it was—Matsu!

Standing in the middle of the boat, she drew herself to her full height and stood quite motionless, in her white Japanese dress, with the golden moon behind her shining down upon the still water. I would give much to have seen Sheila at that impressive moment; she must have been perfectly marvellous—like nothing merely mortal, like Morgan le Fay, or the golden Aphrodite herself emergent from the lake.

Matsu saw her, and stood stock still, pointing with outstretched finger:

"Who's that?" he faltered, in Japanese.

There was a moment of tense silence; then, the vision called out to him, in that honey-sweet voice of hers:

"Matsu!"

The Lord Abbot leapt from the bank to the landing-stage and narrowly missed plunging into the lake.

"Sheila!"

It seemed strangely natural, so Sheila told Professor Whitelock afterwards, that extraordinary meeting after that extraordinary separation. Matsu was standing in the boat with her and his arm was round her.

"Why—you—here?" he asked.

"I came to find you," said Sheila. "I'm your wife, you know."

After the boredom of the return to Japan, after poor Joani's twaddle—what an escape, what a miracle !

" Why—you—come ? " asked Matsu, again.

" I wanted you, Matsu ; I always did ! "

" But—why ? "

" I suppose—I love you."

It was quite true. Sheila had begun to think that the meeting, when and if it were to come to pass, would be too awful ; that a Japanese Matsu would be quite intolerable ; that her passion was dead. It was very much alive !

" Please, sit down," said a voice from the shore, " or you fall in water, quite ! "

They obeyed, and behold ! they were being rapidly rowed out from the shore along the golden pathway of the moon.

" What a marvellous night for a bathe ! " said Sheila. " Shall us ? "

" Let's ! "

In a couple of minutes shoes, stockings and kimonos were shed, and to the astonishment of the monastic boatman, two bodies, one white, one brown, leapt with tremendous splashes into the warm, oily water.

" *Ara ! Nan da ?* " gasped the monk. His first thought was that this was *shinju*, a case of lover's joint suicide ; but no, the two victims were splashing the water at each other, and the silent groves of Kamidani were echoing with peals of laughter.

CHAPTER XXII

"I've often wondered if I'd ever find you again," Sheila was saying. "I never thought I'd find you in a lake."

Matsu laughed. He was supremely happy, they were both supremely happy—with that unreasoning happiness of lovers which had descended upon them once or twice in England.

Still wet from their bathe, kimonos thrown on anyhow, they were scrambling up the steep path on the sacred island, which led up to Genson Shonin's sanctuary. Matsu's hand held hers, then it slipped round her waist, then it caught the rounded softness of her breast. They paused as by common consent, her arms closed about his neck, his hands pressed her to him; their lips met, their eyes closed; she was his!

The golden moon looked down upon them from the dome of an indigo sky, the golden stars danced around her, brighter than any English stars.

In silence they reached the temple, closely embraced.

"I play here when I was little boy," said Matsu, "I was always happy here."

Keiichi, the acolyte, received them in the courtyard with a low bow, most solemn and deferential; "yet he must be laughing at us all the time," thought Sheila.

He had known just what to prepare for a honeymoon couple. There was a bed of fragrant bracken strewn in a corner of the sage's hermitage; there was an earthenware flask of *saké*, mulling in a bowl of hot water; there was a kettle singing over a tiny

pot of charcoal ; there was a basin with real soap (rather unduly perfumed) a jug of water and two towels imprinted with a landscape and a poem.

The sentimental Soda San, who had thought out the setting for this idyll, had fondly imagined that the first thought of his master, the Lord Abbot, would be for the memory of Genson Shonin, the tutelary spirit of place ; but I doubt whether throughout that passionate, absurd, fantastic and wholly delightful night, the thoughts of Matsumoto Choson ever once harked back to the historical exile of his illustrious ancestor.

CHAPTER XXIII

"SERMONS and Soda the day after!" laughed Sheila.

She had been awakened at dawn out of a deep and satisfied sleep by the clatter of the paper walls of Genson's cottage being pushed aside to admit a very early visitor. It was a Japanese in a dark grey kimono ; he was kneeling at the window-doorway, and was knocking his forehead against the floor. She, the Angel of Audley Street, was, lying on a spread of ferns in the corner of a native cottage. By her side lay a handsome young Oriental, very dishevelled and quite inert. Obviously, she must be dreaming, and would presently awake in her Louis XV. bed to the distant rumble and hooting of London. She would try shouting to herself ; perhaps that would wake her up.

"Matsu!" she screamed.

The untidy young man turned as he lay, and grunted. Sheila poked it in the ribs with her fingers to see if it were really alive. It was much more solid

than thin air ; it grunted again, it sat up and stared at her. Its astonishment was so comic—the drooping mouth and the bulging eyes—that Sheila began to laugh. She laughed and laughed ; she could not stop laughing ; and then Matsu began to laugh. The contrasting gravity of Soda San was so absurd, that the boy and girl went on laughing at him long after they had finished laughing at each other.

" Please excuse," said Soda, when he became audible, " very funny, but no time, quite ! "

They must return at once, he said, to Nara, whence he could telephone to Kyoto and learn the latest news. They must be ready for immediate action. The fate of the Johoji depended on the next twenty-four hours ; it depended on the bearing and prestige of its Lord Abbot ; he alone could save the Matsumoto family from disgrace and overthrow ; he alone could preserve the tradition of Genson Shonin.

But the Lord Abbot was in the kitchen, washing over a basin, so Soda San turned the flood of his eloquence on to Sheila.

" I'll do my best," she said, when she got a chance of speaking, " but what can I do ? "

" You must obey me," said Soda. " You must do just what I say—because I know. You never know ; he never know—but I know. Quite ! "

Once again, the queer little man impressed Sheila —his determination, his devotion, his power.

" Can I really help him ? " she asked.

" You help very much, I know," he answered, reflectively. " But you must wear Japanese kimono, and you must look nice—in Japanese way ; that is not easy for English lady."

" I'll try," said the " Angel " in profound humility; she had never before been told it was difficult for her to look nice !

It was her turn for the wash-tub. There was no privacy ; she had to strip and wash before the two men—and Keiichi, who wandered through her bath-room with tea and salted plums for His Holiness—but none of them paid any attention to her except the solemn Keiichi who bowed to her in her nudity and inquired after her health !

What a world ! What a marriage ! What an awakening ! What an adventure ! What a scream !

In half an hour's time they were crossing that strange lake once more in the freshness of the early morning. In an hour's time they were bumping homewards in that stout Buick car down the golden gorge of Kamidani. Sheila and Matsu and Soda had settled down in the back of the car—they were none of them over-broad in the beam ; and Soda was discoursing at interminable length on the present situation at Kyoto and the different ways of dealing with it. But, quite suddenly, Matsu stopped the car and banished his adviser to the seat beside Grock, the chauffeur.

" He bores me," said Matsu, as he folded Sheila in his arms—" They all bore me."

" What do you want to do, Matsu ? "

" Get away from it all ; it is all too silly—my being a Buddha, I mean. I'm not. I'm just ordinary, like everybody else. I want to have fun—take you for golf, this afternoon ; then nice warm bath ; then a little dinner in my own house—then take you to a theatre, and then supper somewhere and dancing—"

" And so to bed," concluded Sheila.

Buddha blushed, and squeezed her more tightly to his side. She was the whole world to him, he knew that now ; and she had come all the way to Japan to find him ; so she must care, really care.

" What is a Buddha anyhow ? " he burst out.

"It's so silly. And if I'm not a Buddha, I have no money, I'm nothing!"

Sheila laughed; she was happy now, perhaps for the first time, ever; that night in the hermitage had made all the difference!

"Yes, lover, you must stick to the Buddha business," she said. "You'll never get as good a job, elsewhere. Beside, it suits me, too; it's quite unique; I like that; I am unique, too; you must consider my feelings, Matsu, and you must fight for your Buddhahood. When you have won your fight, you can live in London. Your sanctity will be more impressive at a distance."

"Sheila, sweetheart, you are wonderful!"

She seemed to have solved the whole tangle with a few words—golden words of magic wisdom; he was at that stage of a lover's absurdity.

"Are we going straight to Kyoto?"

"I think not," answered Matsu. "Perhaps we first go to Osaka. That is what Soda tell me."

"Why Osaka?"

"There is a Buddhist priest there called Okabé. He is a very good man, very good man indeed. Every one in Japan respect him so much. Soda says that in the Johoji temple, if Mr. Okabé says it is so, then it is so; everybody follows him because he is good. Soda says that Mr. Okabé is not against the Matsumoto family. Perhaps he will come to Kyoto and speak for us. Then all is quite well, I think."

"The plot thickens, Matsu; I think I am going to enjoy to-day."

They were nearing Nara. On the left-hand side, across the rice-fields, stood the squat pagoda of the Horyuji, most ancient of Japanese temples and headquarters of the Hosso sect; in front of them

was the park-like domain of the Kasuga shrine, where the flocks of sacred deer follow the coal-scuttle-hatted Shinto priests—and any one else available—in quest of titbits to eat.

It was about eight o'clock on an autumn morning, bright and warm.

The motor stopped, and Soda dismounted for another conference—in Japanese. Really, the talking of these people was interminable. Then, it changed to English.

"Miss is very conspishous," said Soda; "yellow hat, foreign dress," he shook his head, disapprovingly. "More better stay in motor-car, quite!"

So Sheila was left—"parked" as she herself described her plight—in a little brown lane in Nara town, not far from the obscure native inn where Matsu and Soda were engaged in telephoning to Kyoto for the latest news from the front: doubtless a further conference then took place. Sheila was not only impatient, but hungry; the emotions of the night demanded more serious sustenance than a pickled plum. Disregarding all warnings, she dismounted and made her way to a cake shop, which her avid eyes had noticed as they passed. They were queer little Japanese cakes, stodgy and tasteless, made of elderly ground rice, but they were better than nothing.

Expecting to be well scolded, Sheila returned to the car, but the Japanese had not yet appeared. When at last they did, they seemed to be very serious and determined about something or other. They had no word of apology or explanation to Sheila. Soda San jumped up in front this time and sat next to the chauffeur, who drove off at once in a new direction.

They were going to Osaka, across the Kawachi hills.

So much, Matsu could explain. As to the rest of the campaign, he seemed to be quite vague.

"But what were you talking about all that time?" asked Sheila.

"Japanese people always talk so much they forget at the end what they say at the beginning. But Soda San is a very clever fellow. He knows all right. What he tells me I do. He's a very faithful fellow, too. But, O God, he does bore me so much!"

With a long yawn, the Living Buddha stretched himself out in the car. Sheila nestled up near to him, and in a few minutes they were both asleep.

The city of Osaka is the most populous in all Japan. It is situated on the flat rim of country which fringes the eastern end of the Inland Sea—very flat, very low-lying, very damp, very foggy. Osaka is the Manchester of Japan and our most formidable rival, an interminable brown-grey city, with thousands of bridges spanning a network of canals, with thousands of tall thin iron chimneys like organ-pipes rising out of a dim, ambiguous atmosphere, with the greasy moats and the great grey walls of Hideyoshi's castle watching in Mycenean dourness the growth and bustle of the modern city.

In one of the many poor quarters of Osaka stands the Hakuren Temple, which is a branch of the Johoji at Kyoto. It is a new building, in shape like an enormous dog-kennel open at the sides. It stands in the middle of a large black court, dusty and dry after its summer and autumn baking. In a corner of this yard are the priests' dwellings, but its population seems to consist mainly of beggars and children. The beggars, in varying stages of rags and ulcers, squat about on mats or on the bare ground around the caged images of the Deva kings, who guard the temple entrance, or at the foot of the broad stairs that lead

up to the main sanctuary. If any worshippers or sightseers approach, they set up a kind of minor cackle which may or may not be appeased with pennies. The children are almost as dirty, but far more cheerful; they are playing desultory games of catch-as-catch-can, all over the enclosure, quieter than English children, and with a fairly strict segregation of the sexes, little boys in blue-spotted kimonos, little girls in rather brighter garb—some of them (little more than babies themselves) with baby brothers and sisters strapped like jockeys to their shoulders. They play queer little dancing games, hopping about, and singing odd little refrains.

"*Asoko wa Okabé San no otera des'!* (That is Mr. Okabé's temple!)" How many a visitor to Osaka has been introduced to that dingy courtyard with those words! Yet—and that is so characteristic of him—Mr. Okabé is not even the head-priest of the Hakurenji. He is a sort of curate attached to the temple. Nor is he often to be found in his single room in the priests' quarters. That is his luxury home, where he occasionally indulges himself for a day or two of leisure and relaxation.

"He who shows pity towards a beggar opens the prison gates of the Hungry Spirits!" That was one of Okabé's favourite texts from the Buddhist scriptures, and there was another one about the heart of mercy being the first and second cause of all peace and pleasure.

He, therefore, lived in a peculiarly nasty slum in a part of the city called Dotombori. It was on the outskirts of one of those great square camps of commercialised vice which are such a feature of Japanese towns; but Hanazaki-cho ("The street of the budding flowers") was neither so respectable nor

so prosperous as the pleasure-city. It was a kind of sink to the licensed quarter, into which had fallen the last wreckage of human lives—gamblers, thieves, beggars, scavengers, brokendown geisha, prostitutes so ruined by disease that even the *yukwaku* had rejected them, pimps that no brothel would employ, idiots, cripples, and members of that pariah caste who in Japan are called the Eta.

Okabé, who would tell you that he was happier here than anywhere else in the world, would explain how, one day, by chance, he found himself in this ragged street of ramshackle hovels and verminous misery. He liked it ; just as a successful financier might like Park Lane ; he inquired if there were a room to let, with the use of a kitchen ; and there he settled down, preaching no sermons and conducting no services, but distributing what he himself, and a few friends, could give by way of relief and listening, without lengthy comment, to the interminable stories of comedy and disaster which crowded every day of life in Hanazaki-cho.

" What is the secret of your work, Mr. Okabé ? " an eminent American divine had once asked him. " I listen," came the reply.

He did not do much good, he said. The very poor are too silly for one to be able to do much for them, " but they are very sweet," he would add, " and they will many of them go straight to heaven."

" What ! Even pimps and prostitutes ? "

" They possess honourable existences, even if they have taken the wrong direction," said Okabé. " I can love and respect them ; it is only by respecting them that I can do anything for them ; and I find that I can respect them, most of them. There are people who can respect wrestlers and *narikin* (profiteers) ; that, it seems, is quite easy ; why then

is it so difficult to respect these poor people in the slums? They are called criminal, but I do not really find them so different at heart from any other haphazard collection of men and women—some bad, some good, but at heart mostly good, only feeble and weak in doing good things; and they have coarse talk and habits which might blind one to their goodness. But now I am used to them, and with such, I find it is easy to say *Namu Amida Butsu.*"

They called him the Buddhist St. Francis, the Apostle of the slums; the newspapers wrote him up and asserted that he had wrought miracles; philanthropists from all over the world, and especially from America, came to see him and gush over him. They found him stolid and unemotional, though they did not dare to say so.

"I grow tired of weeping over my own sufferings," said Okabé. "So now I weep over the sufferings of others. That's all."

Such was the man, original, eccentric and perhaps inspired, upon whose assistance the astute Soda San was building his plan for saving the Matsumoto dynasty. He had twelve hours, at the outside, in which to bring off his *coup*, and he had nothing in his favour except his enemies' ignorance of his movements. At one time Soda had been an important personage in the Johoji hierarchy, but owing to his long absence in England he had dropped out of consideration. Naito and Kawada were new men, and had no knowledge of Soda's strength.

Their plan was to secure the deposition of the Matsumoto ascendency by general vote of the priests assembled at Kyoto. There were about two thousand of them available for the purpose; they had no credentials to act for the whole sect; but they would

serve their purpose. Since the scandal of the treasure-hunt and the prevalence of a rumour that the young Lord Abbot was wasting his time with a foreign concubine, the feeling against the Matsumotos was running very high among the Kyoto priests, and the country members had taken a solemn oath that they would not return to their villages until the dynasty had been overthrown.

That very evening the vote was to be declared, and there could be no doubt as to its result. The deposition of the Matsumotos would leave only three members of the Board of Management, that is to say, Naito, Kawada, and Okabé, who would act as a Regency Council, until a new Lord Abbot had been elected by general vote of the priesthood. In the interval, the Regency Council would proceed with the replacement of all those members and connections of the Matsumoto clan, who held almost all the most desirable incumbencies throughout the country. This would put all the plums of preferment at the disposal of Naito and Kawada; for it was inconceivable that the visionary Okabé would wish to concern himself with mundane affairs. The preferment would be used by Naito and Kawada to secure the election of their own nominee to the Johoji papacy, the most powerful ecclesiastical position in Japan. Naito's nominee would be Naito, and Kawada's Kawada; that was the only difficulty. The rest was plain sailing.

The civil authorities would gladly have intervened, for—although no one dared to mention so dangerous a thought—the fall of the Matsumotos reflected unfavourably on the position of the Imperial House. But such was the hostility of public opinion, aroused against the Matsumotos by the suicide of the protesting priest, that it would be useless, even dan-

gerous, to send the *gendarmerie* to break up the encampment of the zealots on Maruyama.

"We must shut our eyes, and squat down, and wait," said the Prime Minister when the *Johoji mondai* was discussed at a special Cabinet meeting in Tokyo.

How could one man, the lean and forgotten Soda, check and divert and turn back again the will of a whole nation, powerfully aroused by a series of sensational events? He counted upon three powerful allies—the strength of tradition, the force of religious emotionalism, and the appeal of sentimental chivalry. For the first, he had the Lord Abbot himself; for the second, he hoped to secure Okabé's support; and for the third, he relied upon Sheila.

CHAPTER XXIV

Mr. Hugh Bledding, that chivalrous champion of distressed dames, had succeeded in finding out most of the foregoing information about the *Johoji mondai*. A good deal of it was to be read in the newspapers; the rest was supplemented by his interpreter's gift of gathering in the gossip of the Japanese hotel where he was staying, especially the talk of the servants and the hairdresser and the more elderly of the geisha. Posing as a reporter, he had visited the camp of the insurgent priests and had listened to their grievances. But he had been unable so far to ascertain the most important point of all, the whereabouts of the hereditary Lord Abbot.

A rumour prevailed among the priests that His Holiness was amusing himself in Tokyo or somewhere with an English mistress whom he had imported into Japan. There was another rumour that he

was still in England, and that the personage introduced to the Johoji as its abbot was an impostor, perhaps some other member of the Matsumoto clan.

He was unfavourably regarded, that was clear. For one thing, he was a Matsumoto.

"From a sour plum tree, sour plums," said the rebels.

Then he was alleged to be dissolute.

"We are no longer in the Genroku Period," they said, alluding to an age that corresponded in date and in other ways with the Orleans Regency.

Then, he had been educated abroad.

"Good Buddhists are not made in Europe," was the comment.

"We want progress," was the general demand; "the Matsumoto regime is reactionary and out-of-date."

Bummeishimpo! Civilisation and progress! Oh, those blessed words! But Bledding believed that the Lord Abbot had only to show himself, and the revolt would be quelled, that half of those rebel priests would be on their knees before him, that the tradition of loyalty would once again win its battle in Japan. Only it must be the Lord Abbot, in person! No other Matsumoto would do the trick; they were a mouldy lot. But where was the Lord Abbot?

Where, for a matter of that, was Sheila, Countess Matsumoto? Bledding had telephoned in vain to find her. She was not at the Nara Hotel, where she was supposed to be. Lord Mannifold, at Kobe, knew nothing of his sister's whereabouts, and seemed quite unconcerned at her disappearance.

"Sheila's like that!" he said. "Goes off on her own, and no one hears of her for weeks; turns up all right, sooner or later. Don't worry about her? Any news of the missing Matsu? Thought not!

Don't believe he exists! Think he was a fraud all along! Wild-goose chase, with poor old Sheila as chief goose, eh?"

Victor Mannifold, bibulous and carefree, did not seem to realise the danger of his sister being kidnapped—perhaps worse. She was an obstacle in the way of a very powerful organisation; and although Buddhism was opposed in principle to the taking of life, it had been known to connive at drastic elimination.

It was on a Wednesday afternoon that Bledding was toiling up the Maruyama hill to attend that historical conference which was to decide the fate of the Matsumotos. Russet and gold, the autumn foliage, burnishing the hills around the city; fluttering like golden moths, the leaves on the breeze; the season itself seemed to speak of decline and fall, the perishing of the old traditions, the decay of the old faiths—picturesque but moribund. All the loafers of Kyoto were there—following the Johoji road, chattering and laughing, as though on their way to a wrestling-match.

But in front of the red, fortress-like gateway that led into the monastic domain, there was a block in the crowd; they were being held up by a strong cordon of white-uniformed policemen. Only a few privileged persons were allowed through. Bledding produced a document which had often stood him in good stead. It was merely a statement in Japanese that he was a member of the British Embassy staff, but it was stamped with the red seal of the Imperial Foreign Office, and this had on several occasions acted as a talisman. Once again the spell worked. Bledding found himself within the gates of the Johoji.

He was wearing a Japanese kimono, a white cotton affair, borrowed from the hotel, and being short and

dark, he was not particularly conspicuous. He melted quite naturally into the mixed crowd, clerical and lay, which surged around the Hondo, the main temple building. From the broad steps that led up to the curtained sanctuary, the official speakers were haranguing the multitudes. In the further corner of the courtyard self-appointed orators, standing on the stone benches or clinging to votive lanterns, were holding forth upon the need of the times, the benefits of civilisation, the glorious spirit of Japan, the heavenly message of Genson Shonin and the decadence of his descendants.

The warm autumn evening was thickened by the stench that arose from this vortex of excited and perspiring men. It is absurd to imagine that Japanese are silent, unemotional and odourless; on the contrary, they can orate for hours on end; they can work themselves up into blind furies of fanaticism; and they smell—a curious, blended, unforgettable odour, a mixture of fish and pickled *daikon*.

Slowly, Bledding worked his way towards the temple. A priest in cream-coloured kimono, with the green scarf of a high official of the Johoji Sect, was reading aloud from a scroll which he held out before him with a pompous and affected air. It was the treasurer, Kawada, intoning the so-called resolution of the two thousand, which proclaimed the deposition of the Matsumoto family—in default of the non-appearance of the Lord Abbot, Count Matsumoto Choson, summoned to answer for the mistakes committed by his family. The document was drafted in classical Japanese and had to be declaimed according to the conventional mode of such solemn utterances, with curious jerks of the voice from the high to the low register. Being very classical, it

was almost unintelligible ; and after a pause at the end of his recital, the globular Mr. Kawada proceeded with an explanation of its terms in colloquial Japanese. Being pedantic and long-winded, his speech dragged. The climax of popular excitement was being too long delayed, the sense of unanimity was being dissipated, the jabber of the monks disputing among themselves began to drown the words of the official speaker.

Bledding, however, who had wormed his way almost up to the temple steps, could hear what the Treasurer was saying :

" Our master Genson has told us that ' A torch illumines the ever dark night of illusion.' That torch was handed down to us through the great lords abbot of the line of Genson Shonin. But as our third lord abbot, Hakubo Shonin, wrote on his death-bed, ' World ever changing, never stable,' so now the time of change has come, when, if we are to preserve the torch that Genson left us, it must be taken from the hands of his unworthy descendants."

In the further corner of the courtyard, in the direction of the monastery buildings and the abbot's garden, there was a movement among that agitated sea of shaven heads. Something seemed to be happening, but from the temple dais, it was not yet clear what the movement might be.

The wind, which had been blowing the leaves about all day, had dropped rather suddenly. There was a curious, thunderous calm, with a lurid, tawny sky against which the tall pine trees of the Johoji park extended their snake-like tentacles. Attendants had brought half-a-dozen cream-coloured lanterns, like great luminous cocoons, marked with the Matsumoto crest. The monks were quieter now, and Kawada's harsh voice rang out across the courtyard :

"The old age is past; the new age is at hand; new life to the Johoji-shu; away with the Matsumoto family."

The speaker paused for applause, and a few voices round the temple called out: "*Sansei! Sansei!* (Approve! Approve!)" The more distant section of the audience had turned their attention elsewhere.

A strange procession was parting that dense crowd. One might have thought—perhaps many of the monks did think—that Kawada's irreverent words had called the past to life.

In front of the cortege, which advanced very slowly, marched with measured and theatrical stride a bodyguard of ten or twelve monks, their heads and faces hidden in those wicker helmets, like inverted waste-paper baskets, in which criminals and *ronin* used to be disguised in ancient days. They were followed by two closed *norimono*—the lacquered palanquins, wherein *daimyos* and other illustrious persons used to be carried about on the shoulders of their servants. The sudden appearance of sedan chairs in St. Paul's Cathedral could hardly be more sensational. Behind the *norimono* walked two small emaciated and ascetic figures in priest's dress with bared heads and faces revealed. One of those faces, unwontedly deep-eyed and almost aquiline, was famous throughout Japan. It was hardly necessary for Soda to set the rumour running among the monks. It spread like wild-fire.

"Okabé San! Okabé San! The miracle-worker of Osaka!"

There was no resistance; and a tense hush fell upon the assembly. In the stormy, golden evening light—the high-pitched temple roof—the gaunt pine trees—the wheeling pigeons—the concourse of priests in their mediæval garb—the slow advance of a

procession that might have come straight out of a Hiroshigé print.

Kawada did not resume his speech; he and the small group of rebel priests around him on the temple parapet seemed to be mesmerised by what was happening. They glanced anxiously at one another, but made no movement. At the foot of the temple steps the *norimono* were lowered to the ground. Out of the first of them stepped a handsome young priest, scarved with the gold embroidered purple which only the ruling family might wear. Out of the second, rather stiff and compressed—"like a butterfly out of its chrysalis," so she explained later on—emerged Sheila Matsumoto, "ex-Angel of Audley Street," more amazing, more queenly than ever before, in a black silk taffeta kimono, with a chrysanthemum design above the instep, and a broad-bowed *obi* of cloth of gold. The shingled hair, *blond-cendré*, parted on one side and naturally waving, and the dancing blue eyes, were new to Japanese conceptions of beauty; but there was something about Sheila's magnetism which would have drawn the sympathies of men towards her, of whatever race they might be. She was conscious, too, that, however quaint and grotesque in some of its aspects, this was the great and critical moment of her existence; victory—and she could face her life henceforth secure of her worth in the memory of that trial; defeat—and she would know herself for the bluffer and mountebank which, even in her own estimation, she was beginning to seem to be.

She was transfigured like a great actress rising to a difficult part. A murmur of surprise and admiration broke from the crowd, and a word could be heard here and there:

"*Kirei! Kirei!* (Beautiful!)."

Bledding could, for the agonising minute, hear nothing but the beating of his own heart. His Lady Sheila, as a princess of Japan, as an emanation of the deity of Amida Nyorai himself! And his were the only foreign eyes to behold this supreme revelation of personality and beauty! Bledding felt in his sash pocket for a small revolver—partly to assure himself that he was not dreaming and partly to be prepared for emergencies, since a crowd is a dangerous and a treacherous beast.

"Who is it?" he asked a priest, who was squeezed up against him.

"*Sa! Go Hoshu sama to sono fujin.* (Indeed! The Lord Abbot and his lady)."

"What will be done now?"

"*Domo!* If he only speaks, they will obey!"

Count Matsumoto and his wife had ascended the temple steps, and stood there together, with Soda and Okabé on either side. Kawada and the ringleaders of the revolt appeared to have been quietly and instantaneously obliterated. As a matter of fact, they had waited, hesitating for a moment in the wing of the great theatre where a moment ago they had been playing the lead, but the audience had no eyes for them now. So they slunk away behind the drop-scene into the sepulchral darkness of the sanctuary where the great ghostly golden Buddhas gazed down upon the empty mats. They fled away like those rash mice, who were caught plotting to beil the cat! They fled through the temple, down the precipitous paths of the park, out from an obscure back gateway, into the city, by the Gion quarter, where in a favourite tea-house they could forget the humiliation of their defeat and could find comfort in the *saké* bottle and the geishas' *samisen*.

They even forgot their accomplice, Naito, Superintendent of Works, who, by pre-arrangement, was waiting in his own small cell engrossed in his studies—a recluse, a man of learning and piety, heedless of politics, aloof from the world. Thence he was to have been dragged per force, reluctant, by the unanimous election of the brethren to be their co-regent with Kawada. He was waiting—waiting in his cell—waiting for the shouting mob; but it never came in his direction.

The Lord Abbot and his golden-haired wife were standing at the top of the steps that led up to the temple, in front of the great money-chest, into which the faithful were wont to cast their offerings. Soda and Okabé, after waiting for a few moments in silence beside them, dropped on their knees and "kow-towed" to their temporal and spiritual lord, their foreheads touching the boarding of the floor. In the courtyard, outside the temple, the Lord Abbot's bodyguard followed their example. Then, almost the whole multitude of monks and laymen—Bledding among them—dropped and plunged their heads to the ground. A few rebels, brave enough to be independent, edged away to the corners of the courtyard or the shelter of the stone lanterns.

Sheila Mannifold looked down upon a vast and obedient flock of browsing sheep.

"For a minute," she said afterwards, "I felt like God. It was thrilling beyond words."

Then, in clear, ringing tones, Matsu spoke:

"Please—arise!"

With a sound like breakers on shingle, the great concourse arose from its obeisance—to the relief of the recalcitrant, who were no longer conspicuous, and of Bledding who was not only in an attitude of great discomfort, but was missing his view of the show.

"Elder brothers," Soda was saying, "Monks of the Johoji, and all of you, our Lord Abbot is here! Certain evil persons had held him prisoner; certain evil persons were keeping him in ignorance of what was happening here; certain evil persons intended to set aside the house of Genson Shonin, and themselves to take his place; those evil persons are not here now"—looking round him as he spoke—"they have run away, like the clouds of night when the sun rises; the Lord Abbot has returned; our Johoji, famous through the ages, has been saved from great shame. Elder brothers, monks of the Johoji, I present to you Matsumoto Choson, thirty-third Lord Abbot in direct descent from Genson Shonin; elder brothers, I present to you his lady, Matsumoto Sheelako, of an illustrious English noble family, daughter of a baron of the English royal court!"

Matsu and Sheila took a step forward and bowed to the assembly who again kow-towed.

The Lord Abbot spoke:

"Elder brothers, for the first time I have the honour of speaking to you. Genson Sama, our revered ancestor has said: 'The Buddha makes Law his body.' By the law of our sect, I am abbot of the Johoji. If you choose some other person as abbot, then our temple is the Johoji no longer, but some other thing. Dissension is a great evil in a family; and because I have brought dissension among you, I am ashamed before Genson Shonin and the great priests of our family. I have thought laboriously ('*un-to*'), What shall I do? Towards Genson Shonin and our Johoji-shu, what is my duty? Purify your heart, that is the way of Buddha. How purify the heart? Not by living luxuriously like certain evil priests, not by repeating aimlessly

'*Namu Amida Butsu*.' I have looked everywhere, and I have found in one place a certain person who knows the true meaning of this 'Purify your heart.' Okabé San of the Hakurenji of Osaka, he understands this true meaning. I choose him for my master, I will carry his bowl. It has been said that a sense of shame is a garment for goodness; in this word is my hope."

There was no shouting, there was no applause when the Lord Abbot finished the speech which Soda had made him learn by heart; the silence seemed to be intensified, that was all; it is thus that a Japanese audience listens to words that come from above.

But Mr. Soda, that masterly impresario, had not yet finished his programme. He stepped forward to announce that Okabé San of Osaka was about to speak. Then, at last, there was a burst of shouting (rather than actual cheers) and cries of, "*Okabé San! Banzai!*"

The little man with the thin Franciscan face explained that he had not willingly left his home among the poor in Osaka, that he knew nothing of politics, that he eschewed contention, but that he had been told that a conspiracy was afoot to set aside the family of Genson Shonin, and to elect some new Lord Abbot. That, he thought, would be a bad thing; it would confuse and distress very many simple people throughout Japan who had faith in the family of the founder and would not understand a new dispensation.

"Besides," he said, "Genson himself has told us that the disciple in following his master should beware of treading in his master's shadow. Between our Lord Abbot and ourselves there is a distance which should inspire discretion. If our Lord Abbot, in his condescension, wishes to set aside that dis-

tance and to learn from my poor people in Hanazaki-cho, he can learn from them as well as from the rich and studious ; for in every man and woman, however bestial their life and circumstances, there is the wisdom of Buddha, the eyes of Buddha and the body of Buddha. This image is like pure gold ; it cannot lose its nature even though buried out of sight and lost to knowledge for many years. This truth I find every day in Hanazaki-cho more easily than anywhere else, therefore it is out of selfishness that I live among the poor. If our Lord Abbot wishes to learn from the Buddha of poverty, this way is more sweet and more easy, I think, than to learn from the Buddha of the rich."

There was no resisting Okabé San, who was individually the strongest religious force of his time in Japan. When he had finished, there was a moment's silence, and then the shouting burst forth afresh. The Lord Abbot and Sheila descended the temple steps, and folded themselves up again into their *norimono*. The bearers raised the lacquer cages, and the cortege resumed its way.

A pale blue twilight had fallen. More lanterns had appeared—creamy-coloured, red and blue ; some quite plain, and some ornamented with designs or ideographs. As in the celebration of some great event, the Lord Abbot and his English wife were escorted through the grounds of the Johoji to the private wing of the Matsumoto family. Bledding, who followed with the crowd, saw them alight from their archaic vehicles, amidst the reverences of their retinue, and, after the removal of their footwear, step up beneath the curved gable of the porch, into the inner recesses of the abbatial dwelling. The paper doors were slid together ; the attendant priests, removing their straw helmets, squatted about

at their ease on the broad verandah ; the crowds began to disperse, some back to their camp in the temple courtyard, some down to the city to spread the good news of the Lord Abbot's return. Bledding still waited and watched in the darkness of the surrounding shrubbery. He was at a loss to understand what he had seen. Matsumoto had returned to the Johoji, and his triumph appeared to be complete. Moreover, he had brought Sheila with him—a quasi-Japanese Sheila, apparently quite at home in the strangest of strange surroundings, reconciled to her amazing marriage, accepting her peculiar destiny with all that it implied. These implications were revolting to the young Englishman. He loathed the propinquity of that priestly mansion, and the scenes of intimacy that it concealed ; but he felt it to be his duty to remain in the neighbourhood, in case of a counter-attack by some rival faction and to guard his lady—(no longer his, alas ! but carried off by evil spirits)—from any possible danger. The grounds of the Johoji were to all intents and purposes a public park, and Bledding had no reason to think that he would be challenged or ejected, but, as he wandered under the moonlight along the gravel path, now almost deserted, in the direction of the main temple, a burly fellow, stepping out of a side-way, blundered into him. It was a priest.

" Excuse me," said an anxious voice.

It was Naito, the Superintendent of Works. He had waited all through the evening for the call which never came. He had heard the crowds pass by, as they escorted the Lord Abbot to his house ; he had imagined that they were coming to summon him to the throne of the Matsumotos. But no, there was no tap on his door, no shuffle of feet down his corridor. He seemed to be quite alone. It had been arranged

with Kawada and the others that he should wait until he was summoned. It would be better that he should not thrust himself forward. But what had happened? Had Kawada betrayed him? Impossible—yet more and more obsessing the possibility! At last he could bear it no longer. He left the monastery by a side door, and—blundered into Bledding.

"Excuse me," said the Englishman, and was passing rapidly on; he spoke fluent Japanese, but his accent was evidently not of the native strain.

"Perhaps you are a stranger?" asked Naito. "Can you tell me what has happened?"

"The Lord Abbot has returned."

"The Lord Abbot—it is not possible!"

"The Lord Abbot, bringing his English wife with him; all the monks rejoicing welcomed him."

"The Lord Abbot—it is not possible," stammered Naito, again; his mind could get no further than that one amazing fact.

"But it is possible; I myself have seen him!"

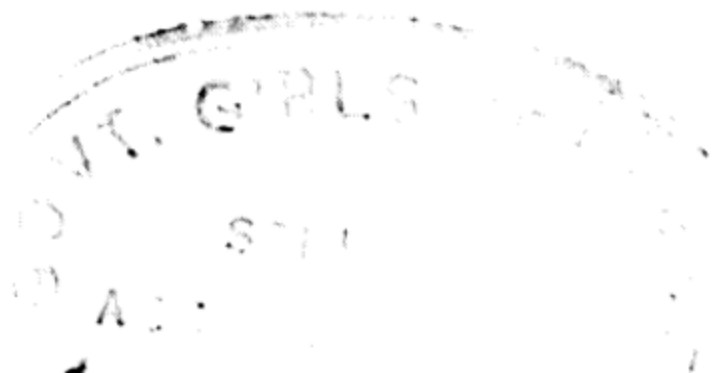
"The Lord Abbot!"

"The Lord Abbot."

"*Ma! Shimatta!* (There! It's finished!) Excuse me!" The burly monk reeled away into the darkness; and, to this day, Bledding has never fully understood the significance of that peculiar conversation.

CHAPTER XXV

NIGHT closed in upon Kyoto city, upon the pine forest of Maruyama, upon the Johoji enclosure, upon the private apartments of the hereditary Lord Abbot, where on a silken mattress spread out upon the floor



Sheila Mannifold slept—or did not sleep—in her Matsu's arms. Outside, in the moonlight, Hugh Bledding, of H.M. Embassy at Tokyo, slept—or did not sleep—on a long flat stone in the Abbot's garden. He had made up his mind not to leave the temple precincts until he had spoken with Sheila and had received from her own lips an assurance that all was well.

From a belated monk he had located the abbot's dwelling. The entrance to the private garden he remembered from the day of the ill-starred garden party. It was bright moonlight. He could see almost as well as in the daytime. He could see monks and servants bustling about the lighted buildings, or outlined as black shadows on the *shoji*, but no one came into the garden and no one interfered with him.

The moon poured its flood of silver radiance down into the semi-circular hollow which formed the famous garden of the Matsumotos. At the bottom of this hollow, a tiny stream, shaped to represent a miniature river, tinkled on its way over sand and shingle—" The Voice of Silence," thus had Genson Shonin named his favourite brook. The shadows of the pine trees were inky black; and from their branches, as from the various tufted shrubs around Bledding's hiding-place, sounded the stringed orchestra of the *semi*—the little winged cricket or cicada, whose music is the very spirit of the night-time in Japan.

Overhead, the golden moon; beneath, the blue film that veiled the roofs of the ancient city; and, here and there, the soft radiance of lantern light piercing through the trees. Waiting in a monastery garden of old Japan for the loveliest woman in London society, waiting to serve (or save) the English

wife of a Buddhist Abbot—Bledding, the romantic Bledding, was not ill-pleased with himself. Half-asleep on his stony couch, he was dreaming of quite impossible contingencies—of a cry for help within the house, of a dash to rescue, a splintering of those match-board walls, a holding-up of a whole army of monks, a skilful retreat to safety in the city, those lovely white arms about his neck, those china blue eyes gazing into his, those lips pressed to his lips—a scent of syringa, a distant murmur of Puccini's music! In such fond imaginings did Hugh Bledding of Harwich dream through that quixotic night. But nothing actually happened—nothing at all. Just the moonlight passing, the songs of the *semi* and of the rivulet, the squeaking and flitting of the bats, the haunted garden and the cold stone.

Just at the chilly hour when light first begins to percolate through the darkness, Bledding started at the clatter of a shutter pushed aside, carelessly or unskilfully, within the abbot's apartments. The rattle of the woodwork echoed across the garden, and the din seemed loud enough to wake every monk in the Johoji.

A figure stood on the verandah, sufficiently un-Japanese in attitude to set Bledding's heart beating with surmise. Very cautiously, he crept down a garden path, crossed the stream and ascended the slope towards the house.

The figure was robed in blue—the blue of the dawn that was beginning to steal through the dusk, a very deep sky-blue. Her head was crowned with that glory of tawny hair, which was famous, world-wide. Her white arms, with clenched fists, were lifted deprecatingly towards the garden.

"O God, O God!" she was repeating in clear and unmistakable English.

The shrubbery stopped short of the house. How could Bledding make himself known to her, without scaring her and without attracting the observation of others? From the shadow of the nearest pine tree, he began to whistle very softly a few bars of that famous melody, "If you were the only girl in the world!"

Her arms dropped; she had heard him. Her whisper came across the gloaming, "Fido, is that you?"

"Yes, Lady Sheila," he whispered back. How marvellous of her, he thought, to know me, at once! Or perhaps, perhaps, she cares for me a little!

She glanced hurriedly around, behind her, slipped her *zori* off her bare feet, and stole along the verandah to where a few steps allowed her to descend into the garden. Here she slipped her sandals on again and in a moment had joined Bledding under his pine tree.

"Quick!" she whispered, clutching hold of his arm, "take me away!"

A Japanese house is all eyes and ears; it sleeps, dog fashion, with half its faculties alert. So, however Sheila managed to get away undetected from a nobleman's mansion swarming with obsequious and officious attendants, remains and will remain for ever a mystery.

Matsu was asleep, fast asleep and snoring. She had crept out of his bed, pushed the *shoji* aside and stolen out into a long passage. A monk was sleeping at his master's door. She had to step over him. At the end of the passage, dimly lit by an oil lantern, she had tried the wooden shutter. To her tremendous relief and joy, it had given way to her touch.

"That place was all boarded in; it was like an immense mouse-trap," she explained; "and I was

the mouse; I was going mad, I couldn't breathe; I couldn't speak; a house of whispering—it was awful. But now I was in the fresh air; I was free. I thought they'd be after me; then, I'd have jumped into the garden and run for it. They'd never have got me back there—never! But I waited—and nobody came, nobody woke up. I think they're all dead in there; it feels like it. My God! What a place! What a life! And then, I heard my Fido's whistle! God bless you, Fido! Waiting out there, all night long! I suppose you saw me at the jamboree! That was fine, wasn't it, Fido? Really well done! Matsu has recovered the throne of his ancestors! But, oh heavens, that house of his—what a place, what a life, what awful creatures!"

Sheila was almost hysterical, as with her hand clasping Bledding's shoulder, she slithered down the dark hill slippery with pine needles, under the spreading dawn of the new day. She was laughing wildly, and at the same time there were tears on her cheeks. Bledding took her in his arms and kissed her lips, even as in his dream. She did not resist, neither did she reciprocate. She just let him kiss, and kiss again; and then she burst out laughing once more, and said:

"For shame, Fido; down, down!"

Somehow, he felt that he had been foiled.

He took her, at times half dragging, half carrying her, to Kyoto station. At that early hour there were no rickshaws, no taxi-cabs available. They had to walk—Sheila shuffling wearily along in her Japanese *zori*, which clung to her feet with one unsteady thong, Bledding in the seventh heaven of amazement and vanity. Not for nothing had he left the semi-detached villa at Harwich, so recklessly named "Sans-Souci." His long vigil and its surprising dénouement had turned his head.

"Sheila," he gasped, as the towers of the ultra-modern railway station at last came in sight, "Sheila—I love you."

"Thanks, Fido," panted the dishevelled Abbess. Fortunately, there were very few people about, for they looked like two revellers staggering home after an orgy, and the contrast between that flaming hair and the Japanese kimono was startling enough to amaze the drowsy housewives of Kyoto as they pushed aside the wooden slides of their little box houses and looked out into the early morning.

"Lady Sheila, I adore you, I want you with me, now, here, anywhere. Fate has brought us together like this!"

That miserable little Fido! What a time to choose for love-making!

"Look here, Fido!" she said; this nickname irritated Mr. Hugh Bledding beyond measure. "You mustn't be silly! I want something to eat first, and then to get back to Kobe, to a clean bath, a proper bed, Victor, Gwennie, sanity!"

"Come with me, Sheila—to Tokyo; I'll give you everything in the world!"

"Is this a proposal, Fido? Or are you tempting me to sin?"

"I offer all that a man can give—a fine position at the Embassy, and I'll be Consul-General before I've done!"

"Thank you, Fido; but it's not for me!"

"Then what are you going to do?"

"God knows!"

CHAPTER XXVI

"WHERE is Matsumoto San?"

Joan Avery, in the course of her oriental training in London, had picked up sufficient Japanese to be able to put a few questions to the sturdy bull-necked youth who appeared to be in charge of the Kamidani villa on the morning after the raid.

"*Wakaranai* (I do not understand!)." That was all the encouragement she got. So, she tried an indirect approach through *O kami san*, the wife of the resident priest, who still remained at her post in the kitchen. *O kami san* was an old-fashioned lady with blackened teeth, a desperate gossip, goaded on, it would seem, by the loneliness of her situation to an extreme loquaciousness, which not even her awe of the "Living Buddha" could staunch.

"He has gone away!" she muttered, for fear muted, though it could not check, her talk. "Indeed, he has gone away; as for going, he has gone; and when he will come back again to Kamidani, certainly to say that is impossible. But living twelve or fifteen years in the behind-country, just cleaning and sweeping and cooking, then all of a sudden, my lord coming here and for a whole week eating my cooked food, sleeping in a bed made by me, saying to me, "*O kami san, O hayo*"—how can I say how great a blessing is thus given to a silly old country woman, how great a thing to remember, how great to tell, for this life and all other lives! This is like seeing Amida Nyorai himself on his golden lotus-plant descending from heaven——"

"But, *O kami san*, where is Matsumoto Sama?"

Only here and there had poor Joan understood

a word or two of the old woman's gabble, yet this might contain matter of the highest importance to her.

O kami san put her hand over her mouth as though that could stop her talking.

"They say," she whispered, "he went away in a boat, he went sailing across the lake; they say there was a person with him, a foreign person. They say that foreign person was a woman. I don't know, of course; perhaps it was not so. I was not allowed to go out of my room, so I could not see. But they talk among themselves, and they say something about a boat and a foreign woman."

Joan could understand enough of this to arouse her wildest fears. Kidnapping was in the order of the day, and it flashed across her agitated brain that Sheila Mannifold had descended upon Kamidani and had kidnapped her Matsu, her husband, the father of her baby.

"This time I'll kill her," she said, in English, aloud. Then, with her hands gripping *O kami san's* she demanded again in Japanese:

"Where has he gone?"

O kami san bowed, either out of Japanese courtesy or to avoid the pressure of those terror-laden hands.

"Please excuse me, *Okusan*, perhaps he has gone to Kyoto. If one goes away from Kamidani, then one comes to Nara; and from Nara one goes to Kyoto or one goes to Osaka. And in Kyoto there is the Johoji temple, and I think perhaps, rather than to Osaka, Matsumoto Sama would go to Kyoto. Perhaps it may be so, I do not know."

Matsu—Sheila—Nara—Kyoto. The four fatal names were sounding in Joan's ears, as hastily she changed into the brown tweed travelling dress that had seen her through Siberia. The rest of her trous-

seau she hastily bundled away into her suit cases. When her packing was finished, she descended from her room, to interview her gaoler.

"I want to go away," she said, pointing to her boxes.

"*Wakaranai!*" grinned the bull-necked person, who was fanning himself on the verandah and gazing out over the lake. She walked past him, down the gravelled (and weed-strewn) drive, to the glorified lych-gate that bounded the estate. Here, another youth, leaner but no less resolute, barred her progress.

"*Ikenai!* (There is no going!)" he said. She tried to walk past him, but he closed the gate, and stood in front of her, shaking his head. He refused to become involved in argument or explanation, and seemed to assume that, being a foreigner, her Japanese was unintelligible. She returned to the villa, baffled.

"*O kami san*, what shall I do? How can I get away from here?" she whimpered.

"Go away, not go away, how shall I say, *okusan*," babbled the old lady, as she chopped away at her peculiar little slices and shreds of vegetable. "Anyhow, I think perhaps to be quiet is best way. This is indeed strange; talking of strange things, this is strange indeed that for thirty years together with Honda San I live in this quiet place, and first Go Monzeki Sama being quite a small boy comes and lives here, and after he goes away, our life becomes more quiet still, except in the time of flower-full-blossoming when very many people come from the cities for *o hanami*, and now all of a sudden, *patto!* those gentlemen from Johoji come with a motor-car bringing a beautiful *Seiyojin no okusan*, and then Go Monzeki Sama himself, grown so big now, coming

all alone and so happy for playing with his *okusan*, like new honeymoon pair, and then more and more of those Johoji men, and they come to serve Go Monzeki Sama or to oppress him, I wonder; and then late at night, I leap with astonishment, (*bikkuri itashimashita !*) there is Soda San himself arguing with Go Monzeki Sama that he must come with him to Kyoto. Who friend, who foe? I ask myself; it is so complicated; to understand just right is impossible——"

"But, *O kami san*, what shall I do? and *danna san*, how shall I find?"

The old woman put a brown finger to her blackened teeth.

"Saying nothing is best," she said. "Now they are all watching. Later, perhaps——!"

She was as good as her word, as her many words. Soon after mid-day, a sleepy hour in Japan, she crept up to Joan who, disconsolate and listless, was sitting on the verandah watching the lake, and pulled her by the sleeve. She led her by a roundabout way to a side door in the garden wall, a neglected exit almost hidden by the high, coarse bamboo-grass. This door was unguarded. Below, on the further side, the rough path led along the lake towards the gorge of Kamidani and the high-road.

It was four or five miles through the forest, and Joan was unused to exercise other than dancing, but she was carried along on twin wings of jealousy and revenge—twin spirits that know no weariness, no exhaustion, no hunger, no thirst, no obstruction and no pain—that give a strange kind of elevation, so that, as in a dream, one seems to skim the earth's surface unaware of effort, intent only on that fixed idea, that hated face, that loathsome voice, that insolent supercilious manner—the fixed idea, to

strike or shoot, so that the accursed face shall never sneer again—the continuous refrain like the reiterative movement of the wheels of an express train, repeating over and over again: "I'll kill her! I'll kill her!"

A little brown figure, with white face and clenched hands, blown along the brown wood paths as by the autumn wind, Joan Avery at last reached the red *torii*, the rough archway that marked the entry into the Valley of the Gods. Here, for the first time, she paused, and her poor fretful brain had to check its ravings and consider practical questions of time and direction. Here, her luck was favourable; some god or some demon was helping and prompting her. A blue-garbed wood-cutter leading two rough horses, unladen, appeared round the bend of the road. After the first shock of surprise at seeing so strange a being emerge from a woodland well known to be a haunt of the supernatural, both man and beast acquiesced in what was evidently some link in the chain of causality, and agreed—for a small remuneration—to carry this ghostly-looking woman with them along the Nara road.

The swift effortless activity of mid-day, the fearless resolution of revenge were jolted to bits during the interminable drag of that afternoon ride towards Nara. Bare-back, astride, on a queer little brindled nag that was all bones and greasy hair, poor Joan was bumped along the country road. The process was making her feel very sea-sick, all her determination was melting away. She gazed at the pine-clad hillsides with growing despair; they seemed to be closing in upon her. The gushing mountain torrent inspired fear rather than refreshment. The wayside temples, and the little couchant farms, the mysterious burial mounds of forgotten emperors, all the lavish

charm of the romantic Land of Yamato, which is the very heart of Japan, had no comfort for her. She looked down at the shuffling shoulders and bobbing head of her horse; she looked aside at the surly peasant who was leading her, and she wanted to die.

She was unshipped at last at the railway station of the little town of Sakurai.

"Much quicker," the woodman had explained, "to take train from here to Nara." Quicker no doubt, it eventually would be, but it involved a demoralising wait of over an hour in a dusty tea house opposite an incredibly inactive station. The little town with its bullock-carts, its quaintly tiled roofs, and the lofty grove of the famous temple of the Three Twists (*Miwa*) gazing down upon the long sleepy street was not without character and charm. But poor Joani, bruised in every joint of her body, could only sigh and groan:

"Oh, this bloody country. I hate it, I hate it, I want to die!"

No more urge to murder and revenge; no more visualisation of beloved brown eyes or hated blue ones; nothing but dull grief, and gripping pain. Yes, keen, downright, physical pain—flooding out over all mental anguish, pain that swiftly dominated her, usurping the throne of her intelligence, so that she could move about and do this and that, and yet be only just conscious of what she was doing. It was in that state that she managed to drag herself into the small, shaky train, that squeaked and whistled its way into Nara—NARA—NARA! Somehow, that word had mastered the girl's tottering mind. If only she could get to Nara, all would be well. There was a hotel there; she could rest and recover. Not at Kyoto; *she* was there. Not at

Kobe: there were people there whom she did not want to meet—just yet. But Nara! NARA! NARA!

It was dark when she reached the city of promised hope, on the same evening which had closed down upon Maryuama after the triumphant return of the young Lord Abbot and his spouse. The *shoji* were glowing, and the paper lanterns were dancing in the breeze, as Joan in her rickshaw bowled along the quiet streets to the Nara Hotel. She fell out of the two-wheeled perambulator into the arms of the hall-porter.

"Missy may be sick," he suggested.

"Very sick," groaned poor Joan.

Then, as the darkness gathered round her, a rather thick voice, pleasantly familiar, formed itself out of the fading scene.

"Why, good God, it's the Countess herself! Where have you been all this time, little Joan?"

"Very sick," gasped Joan Avery and fainted, really fainted this time, in the arms of Lord Mannifold.

He carried her, very tenderly, and with remarkably steady steps, along the ground floor corridor to his own bedroom. He laid out the frail, limp body in the middle of the double bed. He rang up the hotel-office for doctors and nurses—at once, at once, damn it, at once! He tried soothing her forehead with water, with eau-de-Cologne. He took her flabby white hand, and patted it!

"Joani, dear, it's all right; don't worry, Joani; they're coming soon."

But she began to sob and groan.

"I've killed her, I've killed her, I say; throw her in the lake, the damned bitch! No, don't, Matsu, don't! Don't hurt me so; don't hurt me; it's pain—pain—kill—kill—shoot her—kill her—kill—kill!"

Now that she was almost unconscious, the insistence on murder and revenge had returned to her poor brain. But Victor Mannifold started to his feet. What did this wild talk signify ?

"Where's Sheila ?" he asked.

The girl struggled, trying in vain to lift herself.

"Sheila ! Kill her, kill her, throw her in the lake ! She's killing me ! Oh !"

But with that effort, she collapsed ; the crazy gasping ceased, but she continued to groan and shake at every breath.

"Where's Sheila ?" asked Lord Mannifold again.

No reply.

Fortunately, at that moment, a small spruce Japanese doctor arrived with a nurse in official uniform. He grinned as he shook hands with Victor ; he grinned as he examined the body on the bed. Then with bird-like alacrity and neatness he produced a syringe and injected morphia into his patient's arm. In a very short time the groaning was quiet.

"Is she dead ?" whispered Victor, alarmed at the sudden calm.

"Oh, no," replied the doctor. "Not so dead ; aw'right very soon, I think."

Victor, abashed and disconcerted, left the room and sought his usual counsel and comfort in the hotel bar. Thither, after a considerable interval, the little doctor came in quest. He was still grinning.

"I am sorry for you, sir," he said ; "your baby —all spoiled !"

"Good God," said Victor, clutching his whisky, "so that's what it was ! Poor little devil !"

And such was the beginning, and the end, of what in more fortunate circumstances might have been Lord Abbot of the Johoji and a living Buddha.

CHAPTER XXVII

"IT is impossible," Sheila was saying. "Do I love him? Of course, I love him. Do I want to be with him? Of course, I do. But it's impossible. If I had two lives, I might spend one of them in Japan, but I don't think so—sleeping on the floor in a draught, eating a lot of rice, washing in the family bath-tub, no relaxation, nothing to see, nobody to talk to, nothing to do—just being a Buddha, or worse still, a Buddha's wife, year in, year out, until I die. It's impossible."

Sheila Matsumoto, née Mannifold, was explaining her case to a small family circle, united in the plush-and-ormolu sitting-room of her suite at the Kobe Hotel. She spoke without apparent emotion in that far-away, musical voice of hers. The only indication of her excitement was the incessant lighting, puffing and rejecting of cigarettes.

"I quite understand," said Professor Whitelock of Bourchier College, "they're so very different from us."

"They're not, really, not in the least," retorted Sheila. "At least Matsu isn't any different. But the life is utterly different. I can't face it. I'm a coward, perhaps; but I'm quite right. If only he'd live in Paris and London and never face his believers, it would be all right. But they won't let him do that; they say he must stay here."

"I've heard him talk like that at Oxford," said the don. "But *you* could take him away, I'm sure of that."

"Of course," Sheila assumed with the assurance of a conqueror. "But what is the use? If I take

him away from the temple, the temple will take his money away from us both. I don't love Matsu for his money, but I must have money to live life as I understand it. I know I can always get it; that's the trouble! Isn't it, Victor!"

"Japan's not half bad," said Lord Mannifold, inattentively. He intended to make a prolonged stay in this easy-going country—with Joan Avery, if she would have him.

"Don't talk like that, Sheila, for God's sake," said Arthur Fenwick, rising, mountain like, out of a rocking-chair and knocking his pipe-ash out on to the miniature roots of a potted pine tree. "We all want money, so why make yourself out to be so daring and so heartless?"

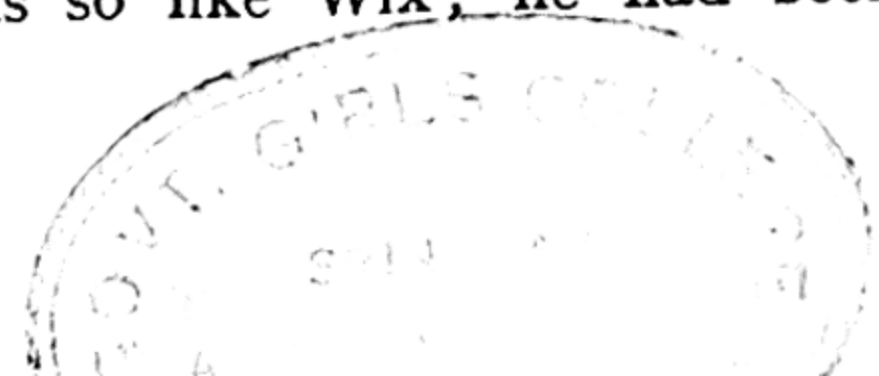
"I am daring and heartless. That's why I've spared you for so long, and that's why I've lost you, Wix."

"I don't understand what you're drivelling about. Is this Matsu business over, absolutely over? That's all I want to know—just now."

"Over—absolutely over—yes!"

Arthur Fenwick had pretended that it was mere chance, a traveller's whim, that had brought him hot-foot across Siberia, with the Buddha's erstwhile tutor in attendance. Sheila had feigned indignation, she had herself felt it, perhaps; but it was rather wonderful to see him there, the vast, imperturbable, faithful Wix, puffing complacently at his pipe, puffing all doubts and perplexities away. He had solemnly averred that a sudden interest in Japanese art accounted for his presence in Kobe at that moment.

She had found him in the lounge of the hotel, when at last she had slept and sobbed out all her thrills and emotions, and was descending to inquire at the hotel office for news of the missing Victor. It was so like Wix; he had been there all the



time, and had not even telephoned to her room.

"I was just waiting," he said. True to type! Wix was always just waiting.

Whitelock had been brought along, that was clear, to deal with Matsu. There was no need. Matsu was already dealt with. Sheila had dealt with him—escaping out of his very arms on the night of triumph and possession, vanishing "like a fox," leaving him disillusioned and perplexed. Soda had dealt with him, telling him to let the foreign woman go and be thankful, that his place was here in Japan on the throne inherited from his ancestors, that there were Japanese women to satisfy him without maddening him, as those foreign "foxes" had done. And Okabé San had dealt with him, pointing him towards the way of self-denial and abdication —*jibo-jiki* (self-forget; self-reject)—pointing to the Osaka slums, him, a young and pleasure-loving man, with little natural tendency to philanthropy and devoid of religious faith. Yet, the prospect attracted him; he knew not why! He was a Japanese, you see, a child of an emotional and chivalrous race! Love touches us, lights us, burns us, sears us—and passes on; the river flows; the cherry-blossoms fall and scatter; nothing is permanent, nothing is real; love, the least real of all transient emotions. Yet, there was something very wonderful in Sheila's pursuit of him, very flattering, too, to his vanity, in that night of ecstasy on the sacred island, in the triumph of the return to Kyoto—the triumph, which he had shared, yes, and inspired. He would never have carried it off without her. Something in this experience, something as different from sexual gratification as the lightning is from the thunder-cloud, had illuminated his life and himself with a dazzling brilliance that he could never forget or deny. For a brief

moment, he was indeed a Buddha—or, as Okabé would put it, he saw unveiled the Buddha that is in each one of us. And yet, when Sheila said, in that fluting voice of hers, that a Japanese life was impossible for her and that she must go, her voice was but the echo of his own conviction. *Kore mo ai daro!* This too is love's way! He was disillusioned and perplexed—yet somehow he was happy.

Whitelock stayed on in Japan for two or three months, and it is to him that I owe the material for most of these pages. He helped me to the facts and to the judgments, such as they are, which I have drawn or implied from the facts. Such a lot of nonsense has been talked about our poor "Angel of Audley Street"; such a lot of dirt has been quite gratuitously thrown at her. Life is a mess, anyway. I cannot find that Sheila was to blame. She has been called depraved, because Matsu was Japanese; and mercenary, because he was rich; and heartless, because she left him.

I don't agree. If these things were true, then Sheila would have deteriorated by the experience. But she didn't. It improved her, vastly. It ripened her, enriched her character, made her happier, too, and kinder. For one thing, she had at last given herself to a lover, and had escaped from that desiccated state of semi-virginity. She never returned to the Xenias and Wandas and Basil Perivales —no, nor to old Black Jack, either, though he offered to marry her, and to leave her his millions.

As a matter of fact, she eventually married Arthur Fenwick. This was fortunate, of course; but then fortune grows quite naturally on Sheila, like her blue eyes and the reddish-golden glory of her hair.

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